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Continuity and Discontinuity in the History of the Welfare State in Czechoslovakia (1918–1956)¹

Jakub Rákosník

The breadth of this study means that it concentrates on general questions, and, consequently, there is inevitably little room for a detailed empirical treatment of the topic. Earlier the same as more recent Czech historiography has already provided a solid array of books and articles mapping main milestones in Czechoslovak social legislation and presenting and analysing the key statistical sources (for example Zdeněk Deyl, Lenka Kalinová, Karel Kaplan).² Keeping this in mind, the presented journal contribution is not intended as a summary of existing knowledge

1 This article was researched and written with the support of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic as part of the project entitled “The Formation and Development of the Social State in Czechoslovakia in the Period 1918–1992.”

2 See KALINOVÁ, Lenka: *Konec nadějí a nová očekávání: K dějinám české společnosti 1969–1993* [The End of Hope and New Expectations: The History of Czech Society 1969–1993]. Praha, Academia 2012; IDEM: *Společenské proměny v čase socialistického experimentu: K sociálním dějinám v letech 1945–1969* [Social Transformations in the Time of the Socialist Experiment. Social History 1945–1969]. Praha, Academia 2007; PRŮCHA, Václav et al.: *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992* [An Economic and Social History of Czechoslovakia 1918–1992], Vol. 1–2. Brno, Doplněk 2004 and 2009; KAPLAN, Karel: *Proměny české společnosti 1948–1960* [Transformations of Czech Society 1948–1960], Vol. 1. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny Akademie věd ČR 2007; DEYL, Zdeněk: *Sociální vývoj Československa 1918–1938* [The Social Development of Czechoslovakia 1918–1938]. Praha, Academia 1985; as for foreign literature, see especially INGLOT, Tomasz: *Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919–2004*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2008.

on the development of social security in the period in concern so much as an attempt to demonstrate long-term trends in social policy in Czechoslovakia. Firstly, I devote attention to conceptual questions. What a welfare state is, or on the contrary is not, is not something that can be read out of primary sources for it is a matter of the *a priori* conceptualisations of historians, determined by their value judgements, ideological standpoints and, to a significant extent, also their pragmatic purposes. It is hard to imagine any serious social science without a precise definition of basic terms and concepts, and every historian is bound to include a proper explanation of the terms that he uses in his work, including a clarification of the reasons for the chosen mode of conceptualisation, so as to defend his own approach in the eyes of the rest of the academic community. Since there is definitely no consensus on the application of the term “welfare state” in Czech historiography, the first section of this article is devoted precisely to that issue. On the other hand, the article intends to identify the main developmental lines, and dimensions of continuity and discontinuity in Czechoslovak social policy. Social policy cannot be described as a matter of pure unconditioned will of political elites, but neither can it be explained in a purely determinist way as the inevitable outcome of structural factors – such as economic, class, demographic and so forth. Indeed, it is precisely the tension between structure and agency, which forms the key theme of probably all the social sciences, including history, that is foregrounded in the second, third and fourth sections of the article where, in chronological order, this tension is demonstrated in the case of the specific development of social policy in Czechoslovakia.

The Communist “Welfare State” and the Terminology of the Social Sciences

The reviewers of my 2010 book repeatedly raised objections to the legitimacy of applying the concept of the welfare state to the conditions of centrally planned state-socialist economy.³ The limits of the review genre meant that the authors concerned could not look at questions of conceptualisation in any extended way, for this would have required them to write a separate paper. Therefore, they merely alluded to the problem, and it is of course a very serious one. It is genuinely debatable whether we can apply the term “welfare state” in Czechoslovakia at all,

3 RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub: *Sovětizace sociálního státu: Lidově demokratický režim a sociální práva občanů v Československu 1945–1960* [The Sovietisation of the Welfare State: The People’s Democratic Regime and the Social Rights of Citizens in Czechoslovakia 1945–1960]. Praha, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy 2010. Among reviews, particularly noteworthy are the following: Vojtěch Ripka in *Sociologický časopis* (Vol. 47, No. 1, 2011, pp. 180–184, untitled), Zdeněk R. Nešpor in the journal *Lidé města* (Vol. 13, No. 3, 2011, pp. 512–515), Martin Polášek in the journal *Střed/Centre* (Vol. 2, No. 2, 2010, pp. 150–155) and Lenka Kalinová in *Soudobé dějiny* (KALINOVÁ, Lenka: Socialistické Československo jako sociální stát: Inspirativní práce o teorii a vývojových tendencích sociálního státu [Socialist Czechoslovakia as a Welfare State: An Inspiring Book on the Theory and Development Tendencies of the Welfare State]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2012, pp. 114–123).

not only in the period after 1948 but also in the preceding period, including the so-called First Republic.

The first obvious step that the historian can take is to scrutinise the sources of the time to see whether they used this term at all, and if so, with what meanings. One of my recent studies is devoted to this subject, and so I shall confine myself only to a few essential observations here.⁴ Overall, the term “sociální stát” [“welfare state”] was used only rarely. Its most frequent use was to identify the ultimate goals of the socialist movement (as had been the case before the First World War), whether in its revolutionary or reformist variant. A different understanding of the term, in which “welfare state” was identified with a state characterised by elaborated social welfare legislation, was nonetheless gradually gaining ground at the expense of this broad socialist conception. After 1945, however, the term was essentially completely dropped in the Czech environment, patently because the term “welfare state” had been used with positive connotations in the propaganda of German Nazism (and, to a certain extent, Italian fascism as well).⁵ It acquired a purely negative semantic colouring after February 1948. The English term *welfare state* was translated into Czech as “stát blahobytu” [“the state of affluence”] or as “stát sociálního blahobytu” [“the state of social welfare”], and was associated exclusively with the Western world in the sense of a populist manoeuvre by which the ruling bourgeoisie had bought the survival of capitalist relations of production by making partial concessions in the field of social welfare. We can sum up by saying that contemporary sources do not provide evidence that the term “welfare state” was much used in the period under scrutiny. On the other hand, historiography has no obligation to use the terminology of the time to describe social reality, and it is often undesirable that it should.⁶

The historian’s natural second step is to consult the existing academic literature. It is not true that the only scholar to apply the concept of welfare state to the Soviet

4 For more detail, see RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub: Historie pojmu “sociální stát” v Čechách [History of the Term of the “Welfare State” in Bohemia]. In: ČECHUROVÁ, Jana – ANDRŠ, Pavel – VELEK, Luboš a kol.: *Posláním historik: Pocta prof. Robertu Kvačkovi k 80. narozeninám* [The Mission of Being a Historian: Tribute to Professor Kvaček on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny – Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy 2012, pp. 323–338.

5 In the case of the German Nazis, there is some ambivalence in this context. While, at the beginning, they used the term “social state” more in a negative sense and identified it with the “rotten” Weimar Republic, once Nazi dictatorship was consolidated, Nazi publicists started to use it with more positive connotations, but of course meaning the “national socialist” social or welfare state, (see GRÄSER, Marcus: *Wohlfahrtsgesellschaft und Wohlfahrtsstaat: Bürgerliche Sozialreform und Welfare State Building in den USA und in Deutschland 1880–1940*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009, pp. 405).

6 Historians are rarely worried by the fact that, for example, the protagonists in the process that we conventionally call the “Hussite Revolution” were unfamiliar with the term “revolution” or that workers in the scattered manufactories of the early modern period, today known as the “proto-industrial economy,” had no idea what industrialisation meant.

satellites has been Tomasz Inglot, as one reviewer claimed.⁷ In fact, one can find far more examples of the use of the term “communist welfare state” or its equivalent “socialist welfare state” in the existing academic literature, including works that are by no means marginal.⁸ Nor does Czech scholarly literature seem to have any major problem with this combination.⁹ All the same, we can agree that the category of “welfare state” is definitely more often used for market economies in which a complex of social welfare policies is understood as a corrective to purely market mechanisms.¹⁰ Then, of course, we face the question of which analytical terms to use when trying to compare welfare policy regimes on the two sides of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. Every comparison in principle assumes the transferability of the separate phenomena investigated onto a common base for comparison. This is why rather than getting bogged down in new sophisticated coinages, it seems more useful to go back to the established terms and explain their application in an adequate way. To do so requires a third step, in which I shall seek to demonstrate more thoroughly the usefulness of the term “welfare state” for comparative historical research on the postwar period.

Comparison of systems of social policies in different states assumes a synchronic approach to the subject in question. If we look for the origins of welfare states, however, a diachronic approach has to be employed in order to explain the process of historical change properly.¹¹ In fact, the needs for a diachronic perspective were originally the main reason why I eventually decided to apply the concept of the welfare state to people’s-democratic Czechoslovakia, and only then did I use it for a synchronic comparison with systems of social policies in other states. There was no space for a deeper analysis of this problem in my book *Sovětzizace sociálního*

7 See INGLOT, T.: *Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919–2004*.

8 For the more recent literature, see e.g. CASTLES, Francis G. – LEIBFRIED, Stephan – LEWIS, Jane – OBINGER, Herbert – PIERSON, Christopher (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2010, p. 672; SCHMIDT, Manfred G. – RITTER, Gerhard A.: *The Rise and Fall of a Socialist Welfare State: The German Democratic Republic (1949–1990) and German Unification (1989–1994)*. Berlin – Heidelberg, Springer 2011; ORENSTEIN, Mitchell: Post-Communist Welfare States. In: *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (2008), pp. 80–94; LEIBFRIED, Stephan – MAU, Steffen (ed.): *Welfare States: Construction, Deconstruction, Reconstruction*, Vol. 1. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar 2008, p. xv.

9 See VEČERNÍK, Jiří: Proměny a problémy české sociální politiky [Changes and Problems in Czech Social Policy]. In: *Sociologický časopis*, Vol. 41, No. 5 (2005), pp. 863–880; TOMEŠ, Igor: Československý sociální stát v období normalizace 1969–1989 [The Czechoslovak Social State in the Period of Normalisation 1969–1989]. In: *Fórum sociální práce*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2011), pp. 51–78.

10 A recent highly stimulating exploration of the possibility of applying the concept of “welfare state” to the case of the German Democratic Republic can be found in: ZACHER, Hans F.: *Social Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany: The Constitution of the Social*. Berlin – Heidelberg, Springer 2013, pp. 6–9. While Zacher gives examples of the application of this term to the GDR, he remains sceptical about such an approach.

11 On the two approaches in historiography, see HROCH, Miroslav et al.: *Úvod do studia dějepisu* [An Introduction to the Study of History]. Praha, Státní pedagogické nakladatelství 1985, pp. 208–214.

státu [The Sovietisation of the Welfare State], and so I returned to the subject in two subsequent texts.¹² In these texts, I tried to highlight the circumstances of the period that I called “the long 1930s” (1929–1945), during which conditions were formed for the possibility of the expansion of social welfare expenditure in European countries in the decades following the Second World War. Both of these texts concentrated more on experience abroad, and so I shall just briefly recapitulate their arguments here. In the following sections, I will focus more on applying these findings to Czechoslovak conditions.

A gradual growth in public spending (including on welfare) can be traced as a long-term trend from the 19th century,¹³ but in this context “the long 1930s” constituted a specific, distinct historical period in which a number of important changes took place. The economic crisis of 1929–1933 shook the existing systems of social security to their foundations and led to a major revision of the dominant paradigm of economic theory: in academic literature, this revision is widely known as the “Keynesian Revolution.”¹⁴ Challenge to earlier economic orthodoxy opened up the possibility of governments abandoning the strict principles of the gold standard and exploiting a wider range of fiscal methods to stimulate economic growth. A parallel process was social demand for the guarantee of economic and social rights – known as “social security” in the terminology of the time.¹⁵ This was because a high rate of unemployment remained a constant feature in the overwhelming majority of European states even in the latter half of the 1930s, i.e. after the end of the Great Depression (with the exception of Germany and partly of Sweden). It was in these circumstances that the Second World War broke out, and while war production rapidly remedied the problem of job shortages, the war brought further insecurity and misery to a large number of people all over Europe.

When the sociologist Miloš Havelka posed the question of the origins and character of totalitarianism in Czech history, he sought to answer it by concentrating on the sociological dimension creating the preconditions for totalitarianism. In this context, he noted that, “[d]uring the occupation and in the postwar period, not only did the social structure of the pre-Munich republic definitively disintegrate, but, at the same time, the Czech population became markedly nationally,

12 See RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub: *Dlouhá 30. léta (1929–1945): Konceptuální přístupy k transformaci modernity* [The Long 1930s (1929–1945): Conceptual Approaches to the Transformation of Modernity]. In: *Dějiny – teorie – kritika*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2010), pp. 222–238; NOHA, Jirí – RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub: *Kapitalismus na kolenou: Dopad velké hospodářské krize na evropskou společnost v letech 1929–1934* [Capitalism on Its Knees: The Impact of the Great Depression on European Society in the Years 1929–1934]. Praha, Auditorium 2012.

13 See LINDERT, Peter H.: *Growing Public: Social Spending and Economic Growth since the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 1: *The Story*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 173.

14 Among the most recent studies on its genesis, see e.g. LAIDLER, David: *Fabricating the Keynesian Revolution: Studies of the Inter-War Literature on Money, the Cycle, and Unemployment*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1999.

15 For more detail on the concept, see TOMEŠ, Igor: *Úvod do teorie a metodologie sociální politiky* [Introduction to the Theory and Methodology of Social Policy]. Praha, Portál 2010, p. 31.

socially and to a considerable extent also ideologically homogeneous.”¹⁶ In his study, Havelka was more concerned with other issues, by using a “sociological dimension,” he fleetingly drew attention to the key conditions of the expansion of social protection in postwar Europe. The world war had had an impact on the social structure to a greater or lesser extent in every European country involved in it, and so contributed to the genesis of a social-political consensus after 1945. The argument in my previous studies, mentioned above, may be summarised (with a certain simplification) in the following points: the Great Depression, challenging the established principles of economic and social policy, in combination with the consequences of the Second World War, created conditions for accepting a higher level of redistribution and state interventionism in the name of the promise of full employment and the guarantee of economic and social rights in both the populations and the political elites in the immediate postwar period. We can see this process as a genuine transnational phenomenon, obvious right across the European continent.¹⁷

Social security, consisting in the creation of a comprehensive network of social policies guaranteeing enforceable social rights to the population – i.e. what in the language of the 19th-century social reformers was known as securing “rights to subsistence” – represented the fundamental element of this postwar consensus. The transnational character of the promise of social security was eloquently summed up by one of the then greatest Czech experts on social policy Antonín Zelenka,¹⁸ who wrote in 1948: “What is involved is a truly new, broader and fuller evolutionary advance on the road by which human society is trying to achieve a satisfactory solution to the question of how to protect the individual from the consequences of the loss or reduction of his wages. [...] As elsewhere, so in this country the task is on the one hand lightened but, on the other, made harder by the fact that this is not just about the creation of something entirely new, but about the transformation of previously partial unintegrated systems into a new unified whole. [...] It is essential that both society and the state, as today the summit of the social hierarchy with real executive power, should take measures to protect the worker from the economic consequences of these risks; that is why a full and elaborated system of social security is necessary. [...] Everywhere there is above all a clear tendency to include the widest possible range of the population in the

16 HAVELKA, Miloš: Srovnání nesrovnatelného aneb Existovala v nejnovějších českých dějinách epocha totalitarismu? [Comparing the Incomparable alias Has an Epoch of Totalitarianism Existed in the Most Recent Czech History?]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2009), pp. 607–624, here p. 619.

17 I offered an account of the creation of this postwar consensus in a transnational perspective in the article “Volby 1946 jako výraz organizované modernity a národního konsenzu” [“The Elections of 1946 as an Expression of Organised Modernity and National Consensus”] (conference paper, publication forthcoming).

18 He emigrated after February 1948 and this is clearly why he was forgotten in his own country. Nonetheless, he worked in the International Labour Organisation for many years and, in fact, was one of its leading authorities in the 1950s and 1960s.

social security system.”¹⁹ In the same work, Zelenka went on to demonstrate the realisation of the idea of social security all over the continent, whether in the context of British or Yugoslav national insurance or the Soviet model.

In 1952, requirements were set out in specific form at the international level by the International Labour Organisation in its Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention No. 102. Communist Czechoslovakia refused to ratify the convention on the grounds that the elementary social rights it was supposed to guarantee were secured even more in the socialist system.²⁰ Yet people’s-democratic Czechoslovakia, too, was building its social policy on the principle of guaranteed social rights; however, it was applying certain different criteria, most often relating to class origin and one’s contribution to building socialism, which discriminated against or privileged certain groups of population.

If we are to regard the realisation of the project of social security in the sense outlined above as the essence of the European model of the social state, then this entails the application of the concept of the “welfare state” as an analytic concept to states on both sides of the Iron Curtain in postwar Europe. The concept of social security was a reaction to the structural processes noted above with which Europe as a whole had been confronted (not only) in the years 1929–1945. The building of the socialist order, the fascist-corporatist model, and different types of social-market economy represented only variants of this reaction, which in the field of social protection exhibited not only differences but also a range of common features – and one of these was precisely the promise of some particular version of social security.²¹ In view of the fact that academic literature has not yet come up with a better and more precise term with which to highlight these common roots, for purely pragmatic reasons it seems most useful to employ the category “welfare state.” This applies at the very least for the study of the history of social policy from a normative perspective, i.e. through legal regulations and their application. It is of course possible that economic analysis comparing postwar social policy in different countries will find a different and more useful concept that will suit its needs better than the “welfare state” concept defined via the normative perspective.

19 ZELEŇKA, Antonín: *Sociální bezpečnost* [Social Security]. Praha, Svaz zaměstnanců sociální a zdravotní služby 1948, pp. 1–5.

20 Despite the declared rejection, Czechoslovak legislators occasionally took note of these foreign standards and adjusted domestic regulations to them, as is clear for example from the explanatory report for the reform of the law on social security for co-operative farmers of 1964 (*Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna*, Národní shromáždění Československé socialistické republiky, Tisky, Print No.184, Vládní návrh zákona, kterým se mění zákon o sociálním zabezpečení družstevních rolníků, available at www.psp.cz/eknih/1960ns/tisky).

21 I develop this argument in more detail with Jiří Noha in the first and last chapter of the above mentioned book *Kapitalismus na kolenou*, pp. 9–29 and 301–310.

The Consensus of the First Republic and Its Collapse

Despite all the contradictions and disagreements in approaches to the period of socialist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia, there is, on the whole, little controversy about the relevance or irrelevance of the “welfare state” concept to the conditions of the interwar First Republic in historiography today. It is the negative view that seems to be universal, since the term simply does not appear in any relevant work (regardless of the fact that actual protagonists in the politics of the time occasionally used the term). The main argument for rejection of the term is that the existing social legislation did not constitute comprehensive protection for the population and some groups were excluded from it (the self-employed, for instance). There was a protective social network in the form of care for the poor, but its standard between the wars hardly met the requirement of guaranteeing an elementary living standard for Czechoslovak citizens.²²

Nevertheless, political elites of the newly founded state made no secret of their ambitious plans for reform of the inherited Austrian and Hungarian social legislation. It must be noted that the most important right-wing political parties – the National Democrats and the Agrarian Party, were in fact in agreement with the left on the main principles of social policy up to the mid-1920s. Zdeněk Kárník once defined the birth of the republic using the conceptual model of four parallel revolutions – national, economic, cultural and social.²³ As far as the social revolution was concerned, he looked in detail at major changes not only in the social stratification and geographical mobility of the population, but also in social protection, writing that: “The revolution of 1918 was followed by a complete avalanche of social legislation and government decrees of a social nature, and this undoubtedly started to play a fundamentally larger role than before in the life of the lower social strata. [...] It was overall the case that the Czechoslovak Republic ranked seventh to ninth in Europe in the standard of its social protection, i.e. almost alongside the West European democracies.”²⁴ In these extracts, Kárník emphasised two basic

22 See PÁTRA, Milan: *Chudinská péče v Čechách v letech 1918–1938 a její historické kořeny* [Provision for the Poor in Bohemia in the Years 1918–1938 and Its Historical Roots]. Dissertation defended at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, Charles University in Prague in 2010. PÁTRA, Milan: *Spolková sociální péče na příkladu okresu Brandýs nad Labem v letech 1918–1938* [Charitable Social Care on the Example of the Brandýs nad Labem District in 1918–1938]. In: CIBULKA, Pavel – HLAVAČKA, Milan (ed.): *Chudinství a chudoba jako sociálně historický fenomén: Ambivalence dobových perspektiv, individuální a kolektivní strategie chudých a instrumentária řešení* [Poorness and Poverty as a Historical Phenomenon: Ambivalence of Contemporary Perspectives, Individual and Collective Strategies of the Poor and Solution Instruments]. Praha, Historický ústav 2013, pp. 501–522.

23 KÁRNÍK, Zdeněk: *České země v éře První republiky (1918–1938)* [The Bohemian Lands in the Era of the First Republic (1918–1938)], Vol. 1: *Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky (1918–1929)* [The Birth, Building and Golden Years of the Republic (1918–1929)]. Praha, Libri 2000, pp. 194–197.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 518 and 522.

phenomena that help us understand the long-term development trends of social protection in this period, and we need to stop and consider them in more detail.

First is the rapid growth in the scope of state power by means of social legislation. Of course, some measures in this direction preceded the birth of the independent state and were originally simply a response to war conditions – they related above all to price regulation or the protection of tenants, which as a result of sharp inflation spread rapidly right across the European continent, including Austria-Hungary.²⁵ Other measures were the immediate consequences of the ending of the war. The demobilisation of armies and war industry faced governments with the need to assist those who became unemployed. For this reason, in a number of countries including Czechoslovakia, which passed Law No. 63/1918, legislation to ease the situation was hastily introduced in 1918 and 1919 if provision could not be based on older legislation. Some reforms did not relate directly to the war, however, and were heralded as providing a new quality of protection for the population. The flagship of Czechoslovak social policy was the introduction of the eight-hour working day (Law No. 91/1918.). This reform put Czechoslovakia right at the forefront of European development, because the Washington Agreement of the International Labour Organisation on the Eight-Hour Working Day of 1919 was ratified by the signatory states later and only reluctantly in the 1920s. In 1924, the Social Democratic Minister of Social Care Lev Winter was to characterise this law with due grandeur as “the work banner of a new world, a banner that dominates the broad horizon.”²⁶ When the calls for radical socialisation of the economy 1920 died down, and after the passing of major land reforms in the same period that had important social implications for the rural population, (although we cannot regard them as part of the corpus of social legislation by standard definitions) governments focused their social reformist efforts on drawing up a new social insurance system (Law No. 221/1924 and 148/1925).

The key parties dominating government policy in the first half of the 1920s agreed on these reforms in principle (with just a few exceptions). Even the National Democrats, the heirs of Czech liberalism of the 19th century, were willing to include points on the need for socialisation of the means of production in their programme, although their motives were based on economic nationalist considerations (i.e. nationalisation of firms or branches not controlled by Czech capital) and not on the traditions of socialism as in the case of the left-wing parties. While the Agrarians constantly raised objections in parliament to unemployment benefits for the urban proletariat, which in their eyes caused a shortage of labour in the countryside where wages were far

25 For example, a law was passed in Britain in April 1918 regulating rents and mortgages. Similarly, in Germany, a decree of September 1918 made rental agreements subject to approval by the administrative authorities. Likewise France fixed rents at a stable level at the end of the war (see WINTER, Jay – ROBERT, Jean-Louis (ed.): *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914–1919*. New York – Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997, p. 408).

26 *Mezinárodní sjezd sociální politiky v Praze 2.–4. října 1924: Těšnopisecká zpráva podaná Mezinárodní sjezdovou komisí* [International Social Policy Congress Held in Prague, 2–4 October 1924]. Praha, Sociální ústav Československé republiky 1925, p. 73.

lower than in urban industry (and sometimes lower than unemployment benefits), for all their often aggressive rhetoric they always eventually submitted themselves to strict coalition discipline and raised their hands for the continuation of these benefits. As far as social insurance was concerned, the Agrarians agreed with the Socialists that it was necessary. Their programme of 1919 categorically declared that “the main mediator of this state care is social insurance, to which we are committed with all our strength.” Although their programme of 1922 repeated the commitment to support social insurance, it declared, at the same time, that “import duties on agricultural products are vitally necessary for Czechoslovak agriculture, and it must be granted that not just our agriculture but the whole of our national economy is not to be exposed to the threat of catastrophic shocks.”²⁷ As Antonín Klimek pointed out, the smooth passing of the bill on insurance of employees by the legislative bodies was ensured by a coalition trade-off: social insurance in exchange for import duties for the agricultural lobby. After insurance was pushed through, however, the socialist parties (reacting to the unpopularity of agricultural protection, which raised prices and so would alienate their voters) dragged their feet when it came to legislating for the import duties. This was one of the main causes (although by no means the only one) why the tensions in the then grand right-left so-called Pětka (The Five) Coalition got out of hand and snap elections had to be held in 1925.²⁸ This sort of exchange deals between the right and left was less the exception than the rule in the creation of political will in the First Republic. More than once the horse-trading had a touch of the bizarre, as for example in 1930 when parliamentary support for a cattle import duty was exchanged for support for an amendment of the law on unemployment benefits.²⁹ While such tactics may strike the reader today as outrageous, they did in fact give the First Republic’s political system a quite unusual stability by Central European standards.

With their assent to employee social insurance (Law No. 221/1924), which was the first to give the right to old-age pensions to the working class (only state employees and higher-ranking officials in private services had enjoyed a claim to old-age pensions until then), the right-wing parties – i.e. the Agrarians and National Democrats – considered their social-reformist agenda fulfilled. The postwar social-reformist consensus, already upset by the poisoned atmosphere inside the broad right-left Pětka Coalition, disintegrated completely. In 1926, a new parliamentary coalition was formed,

27 IDEM, pp. 116–153, Document No. 12 – Program “Republikánské strany zemědělského a malorolnického lidu” [Programme of the “Republican Party of the Agriculture and Small Peasant People”], 29 June 1922, here p. 129.

28 For more detail, see KLIMEK, Antonín: *Boj o Hrad: Vnitropolitický vývoj Československa 1926–1935 na půdorysu zápasu o prezidentské nástupnictví* [The Struggle for the Castle: The Internal Political Development of Czechoslovakia 1926–1935 on the Groundplan of the Fight over the Succession to the Presidency], Vol. 2: *Kdo po Masarykovi* [After Masaryk, Who?]. Praha, Panevropa – Institut pro středoevropskou kulturu a politiku 1996, p. 312. Klimek notes that this was the biggest blow to the then coalition in its whole period of existence.

29 See KLIMEK: *Velké dějiny země Koruny české* [History of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown], Vol. 14: 1929–1938. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka 2002, p. 57.

later known as the Gentlemen's Coalition. By taking the German civic parties into government, the Agrarians together with other Czech and Slovak non-socialist parties hoped to create a government coalition that could manage without the Social Democrats and the National Socialists (not to mention the Communists). It was the first essentially right-wing government coalition in the history of the First Republic. Introducing social insurance was obviously the furthest where the right-wing parties were willing to go.³⁰ The government of civic parties took heed of the complaints, especially from small and middling entrepreneurs, that insurance payments were an excessive burden for their businesses. This was why the then Minister of Social Care, Jan Šrámek, came up with a proposal in October 1927 that was to become the basis for the so-called first reform of social insurance.³¹ The Socialists and especially the Communists managed to mobilise the streets against the government's plans, and a series of popular demonstrations that took place at the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1928 forced the coalition to revise its plans. The government finally reached a certain compromise with representatives of the Socialists, which rather blunted the sharp edge of the reform (Law No. 184/1928).³²

The 1924 law on social insurance was only partially new. It certainly improved the quality of the level of social protection of waged workers; insurance was essentially always orientated on workers, and not on the indigent, who needed to be assisted from other sources because they were unable to pay insurance from their earnings. On the other hand, this law also hardened tendencies inherited from the pre-war Austrian and Hungarian Social Law Code build on so-called Bismarckian principles.³³ This meant the strengthening of the regime of corporatist solidarity,³⁴ manifested

30 See MATOUŠEK, Josef: *Jak čsl. národní demokracie uplatňovala svůj sociálně-reformní program?* [How Did the Czechoslovak National Democrats Implement Their Social Reform Programme?]. Praha, Sekretariát Čsl. N. D. 1925, p. 10; HARNA, J. – LACINA, V. (ed.): *Politické programy českého a slovenského agrárního hnutí 1899–1938* [Political Programmes of the Czech and Slovak Agrarian Movement 1899–1938], pp. 191–216, Document No. 16 – Rezoluce přijaté sjezdem Republikánské strany zemědělského a malorolnického lidu ve dnech 30. října – 1. listopadu 1932 v Praze, here pp. 205–208.

31 On criticism of its provisions, see WINTER, Lev – ŠTERN, Evžen: *Útoky na sociální pojištění* [Attacks on Social Insurance]. Praha, Ústřední dělnické knihkupectví a nakladatelství 1927.

32 For more detail see DEYL, Zdeněk: *Vývoj dělnického sociálního pojištění v Československu v letech 1924–1938* [The Development of Workers' Social Insurance in Czechoslovakia in the Years 1924–1938]. In: *Československý časopis historický*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1976), pp. 508–534.

33 The Bismarckian conception of social insurance was based on the principle of the relationship between earnings (and hence premiums) and benefits (so-called *earnings-related benefits*). In contrast, Beveridge's conception was premised on the principle of minimum equal benefits (so-called *flat-rate minimum benefits*). In the latter system, the middle and upper social classes had to secure a higher living standard in retirement by extra insurance with financial institutions or by means of what was known as *occupational pensions*. For a thorough treatment of this distinction, which is still apparent on the European continent today, see BONOLI, Giuliano: *Two Worlds of Pension Reform in Western Europe*. In: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2003), pp. 399–416.

34 On the history of corporative solidarity in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, see MUSIL, Libor: *Statusová solidarita a česká sociální politika* [Statuts Solidarity and Czech

in the existence of mutually closed insurance or welfare systems for individual categories of workers – for miners, private officials, ordinary employees and state officials (with some partial deviations for a number of special groups within these corporate groups). A specific legal basis existed for every corporate “estate,” differently set benefits and services and also its own organs to administer insurance. This system lasted right up to 1948 without major changes.

The second point made by Zdeněk Kárník in the passage cited above concerned the general rating of the level of Czech social protection in European-wide context. Of course, identifying such a hierarchy of states for the interwar period is extremely risky. Kárník was distinctly aware of the problem himself, as is clear from the cautious way he placed Czechoslovakia “in seventh to ninth place,” and the fact that he found it necessary to rate the levels of different segments of social protection. Czechoslovakia of the 1920s was really one of the most advanced European states in some of these segments (social insurance), in others it was a good average (care for the unemployed) while in other spheres it was far below average (housing policy). Nowadays, it is common to measure the level of social protection by social expenditure as proportion of the Gross Domestic Product – but given the lack of both reliable statistics and trustworthy comparative historical studies, it is highly problematic to attempt to do this for the interwar period. This is also why the following conclusions need to be taken with a large pinch of salt, mainly only as a way of “kicking the ball into play” for future, substantially more thorough comparative research.

Among more recent authors, there is one scholar who has tried to give an overview of the development of social transfers, and that is Peter Lindert. He claims that these transfers varied below the level of one percent of GDP up to the 1880s. Traditionally, Great Britain had been the leading state in the extent of social redistribution thanks to its relatively advanced care for the poor at national level with roots going back to the Elizabethan laws passed at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century. In the last two decades of the 19th century, Britain was overtaken as measured by proportion of GDP by the small countries of Denmark and Norway, which were then starting to build their systems of universal old age pensions. Bismarckian Germany, usually seen as the pioneer of the social state, remained way behind the states mentioned above from the point of view of social transfers. This was because of the nature of its insurance, which was financed mainly by employees and employers via insurance payments, while the role of taxpayers was only minimal. A generally faster growth in social expenditures became a trend after the First World War, and was closely related to political circumstances, above all to the collapse of the old monarchies in the centre of Europe and the rise of republican regimes in lands such as Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, where Social Democratic parties were influential. Weimar Germany was among the leading European countries at this stage as regards the level of social transfers, with almost five percent of its GDP spent on social transfers. In 1930, Germany

Social Policy]. In: *Sociologický časopis*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1995), pp. 423–434, here pp. 423–426.

was followed by Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Britain and Australia.³⁵ If we base our estimate on the calculation made by Antonie Doležalová, transfer expenditure in Czechoslovakia, at the time when the economy had stabilised, i.e. in the latter half of the 1920s, varied slightly above four percent of its GDP.³⁶ Two conclusions can be drawn from these quantitative data. First, even taking into account the very approximate nature of the data, it is clear that up to the Second World War, social redistribution, including states with the most ambitious social policies, was very low. Second, from the point of view of expenditures on social transfers, Czechoslovakia appears to have been among the most redistributionist states, even if it did not attain the level of Weimar Germany.

The Long 1930s

In Czech historiography, the periodization of the interwar period is essentially determined from the perspective of political history. This certainly has its advantages, but considering the years 1918–1938 as a unified epoch can inhibit fruitfully different approaches to the conceptualisation of time in the cause of understanding the past. In his classic work of 1944, *The Great Transformation*, the Hungarian philosopher, historian and economist Karl Polanyi stresses (in contrast to our habitual Czech view) the qualitative difference between the two interwar decades. In this epoch, bounded by two world wars, he saw the collapse of the civilisation of the 19th century, which had rested on four institutions: the balance of power, the gold standard, the self-regulating market and the liberal state. There was a sudden change of direction at the beginning of the 1930s. In Polanyi's view, its milestones were the abandonment of the gold standard by Great Britain, the five-year economic plans in the Soviet Union, New Deal in the United States, the Nazi revolution in Germany and the failure of the League of Nations. While the 1920s had seen a conservative attempt to restore the *status quo ante*, the 1930s meant revolution.³⁷ Polanyi's perspective is not in fact alien to other classic texts of contemporary foreign historiography³⁸ and in my view it is not without its value for understanding the transformations of Czechoslovak social policy during the Great Depression and after it.

35 See LINDERT, P. H.: *Growing Public*, Vol. 1, p. 173.

36 See DOLEŽALOVÁ, Antonie: *Rašín, Engliš a ti druzí: Československé státní rozpočty v letech 1918–1938* [Rašín, Engliš and the Others: Czechoslovak State Budgets in the Years 1918–1938]. Praha, Oeconomica 2007, p. 297. It is not, however, clear, how far Lindert and Doležalová are using the same method to determine these expenditures.

37 See POLANYI, Karl: *Velká transformace* [The Great Transformation]. Brno, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2006, pp. 9 and 26.

38 See MAIER, Charles S.: *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1975. More recently see e.g. BOYCE, Robert: *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2009.

Czechoslovak governments found themselves in a serious quandary in the 1930s, with tax income falling, but at the same time the unavoidable need to tackle the social impact of the crisis, whether in the form of unemployment benefits or the funding of public investment projects. The socialist parties found themselves under pressure from the civic parties and on the defensive. They therefore concentrated (not always successfully) on preserving the existing standards of social legislation at the price of giving up on more ambitious reformist plans. The proportion of government expenditure in overall GDP was not strikingly above the European average, and the problem of Czechoslovak fiscal policy lay elsewhere.³⁹ Governments failed to effectively reduce the tax burden on the population during the crisis. While GDP was falling, taxes had a tendency to grow; this naturally did not provide the necessary stimulus to economic revival, and was certainly one (but by no means the only) reason why the Czechoslovak economy was quite slow to climb out of the crisis. Concurrently, the state became ever more indebted. The state debt equalled roughly two thirds of GDP in the last years of the First Republic (according to data of 1937, GDP was 72.2 billion Czechoslovak Crowns and the debt 43.9 billion Czechoslovak Crowns).⁴⁰ All the same, ideas that the Republic was at this time on the edge of bankruptcy as a result of excessive debt may be consigned to the realms of fantasy.⁴¹

The government lacked a long-term conceptually grounded anti-crisis policy in the first years of the crisis. It was not until the autumn of 1932, under Jan Malpetr's government, that a more thorough deflationary policy was adopted; this was characterised by moves to major reductions in state expenditures, including restrictions of unemployment benefits (Government Order No. 161/1933). Signs of economic revival gradually began to appear after the devaluation of the Czechoslovak Crown in February 1934. The next government, led by Milan Hodža, which was appointed before Christmas 1935, tried to adhere to its slogan that "an effective solution can only consist in a policy of work, not a policy of support,"⁴² but failed to agree on

39 See MIDDLETON, Roger: The Size and Scope of the Public Sector. In: GREEN, S. J. D. – WHITING, R. C. (ed.): *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1996, pp. 86–145; MITCHELL, B. R.: *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1988*. Basingstoke – New York, Macmillan – Stockton Press 1992.

40 See MAYTOVÁ, Alena – NOVOTNÝ, Jiří – PEKOVÁ, Jitka: Československé veřejné finance v letech 1918–1938 [Czechoslovak Public Finance in the Years 1918–1938]. In: *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (1998), pp. 27–36.

41 This view was presented by Antonín Klímek. For more detail on his criticism, see RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub: Všude samé dluhy: Krize veřejných rozpočtů a sociálního pojištění první republiky [Nothing but Debts Everywhere: The Crisis of Public Budgets and Social Insurance of the First Republic]. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2011), pp. 37–41. This question is essentially more interesting in connection with neighbouring Nazi Germany, where, according to some, the threat of state bankruptcy was one of the main motors of the expansionist policy in the years 1937 and 1938 (see ALY, Götz: *Hitlers Volksstaat: Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*. Bonn, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2007).

42 Cited in DEYL, Zdeněk: Sociální politika Československa ve druhé polovině třicátých let [The Social Policy of Czechoslovakia in the Second Half of the 1930s]. In: *Sborník k dějinám*

what this should mean in practice. Furthermore, this was a period of growing fear of Hitler's Germany, which had an inevitable effect in shaping government priorities. The state started to arm up and so public debt increased even faster, although employment rates naturally rose.

Czechoslovak social policy in the 1930s is hardly one of the most frequented themes in Czech historiography. Yet, we can still find diametrically opposed interpretational perspectives – and, let us admit it, perspectives of an interesting kind. Was Czechoslovakia just treading water and running on the spot, reaching for no more than stopgap counter-productive measures in a time of budgetary troubles, or was it on the threshold of a new epoch? Gregory Luebbert in his inspiring monograph on the political regimes of interwar Europe, published in 1991, made the following comments about Czechoslovakia: “The break with orthodoxy came in 1934, and combined a devaluation of the Crown (repeated in 1936) with agricultural relief measures, improved social assistance, import restrictions, and fiscal stimulus. Social Democrats and Agrarians in Czechoslovakia actually did what their Scandinavian counterparts have merely been credited with doing: they used large fiscal deficits to stimulate the economy.”⁴³ The conclusion seems to be, then, that what is known as the Scandinavian social model was only a whisker away from being born not in the north of Europe but in its heart. It is a seductive interpretation; however, we need to be cautious. Luebbert mentions a series of public works projects, but entirely omits the arms industry, which from the point of view of costs was indeed a crucial field of these investment activities. On the basis of the current state of historical research, it appears that the growing indebtedness of the state was primarily motivated by awareness of foreign-political threat coming from Germany, and not by consciously targeted efforts of the coalition to exploit “Scandinavian” principles in a thorough-going way.⁴⁴ Luebbert likewise overestimates the improvements made in Czechoslovak social legislation in the 1930s. While the Scandinavian countries legislated with a view to improving the preceding state of affairs, in Czechoslovakia the aim was more to restore the situation at the end of the 1920s, which had been compromised by the deflationary measures of the government in 1933. In this context, we should regard Zdeněk Deyl's picture of the stagnation of social reformist legislation as the more persuasive and adequate.⁴⁵ It should also be noted that none of the key political parties of the time took any steps in the period concerned that might be characterised as undermining the Bismarckian logic of social protection, founded on the principle of membership of a corporate estate and a high level of commitment to the principle earnings-related benefits, as it had been developed on Czech territory since the 1890s.

19. a 20. století [Anthology on the History of the 19th and 20th Century], No. 13. Praha, Historický ústav AV ČR 1993, pp. 249–271, here p. 269.

43 LUEBBERT, Gregory: *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1991, p. 291.

44 See RÁKOSNÍK, J.: *Všude samé dluhy*.

45 DEYL, Z.: *Sociální politika ve druhé polovině třicátých let*.

The Great Depression had a different impact on different pillars of social protection. The “Ghent System,” i.e. unemployment insurance based on benefits paid out from union treasuries with a state contribution (Law No. 267/1921), which had come into force in 1925, found itself in a literally catastrophic situation. It was more or less immaterial in the 1930s whether a state had compulsory or voluntary insurance, because none of them could cope without massive subsidies from public budgets under the strain of mass unemployment. Miners’ insurance had also to be rescued using state funds, but the problem was caused less by the crisis than its inadequate insurance mathematics.⁴⁶ Health insurance for employees likewise suffered deficits, caused partly by premiums that had been set too low and partly by the loss of insurance holders as a result of unemployment.⁴⁷ Pension insurance came relatively well out of the crisis; in the case of the Všeobecný pensijní ústav [General Pensions Institution] better than in the case of the Ústřední sociální pojišťovna [Central Social Insurance Company] because white-collar service conditions of officials were more stable even in the crisis period than the work conditions of workers. Because pension insurance was based on long-term capitalisation (compared with today’s running financing [PAYG – Pay-As-You-Go]), insurance institutions became important creditors, especially of the state and the other public corporations).⁴⁸ The problems only started to mount during the Second World War, and for two reasons: firstly because of growing inflation, to which any method of capitalisation is very sensitive, and secondly as a result of the partial reform of the insurance laws, which was motivated purely by current needs and took no account of the long-term balance between incomes and expenditures. Following the end of the war in 1945, the insurance institutions found themselves quite unable to cope without unsystematic subsidies from the state budget. This problem only facilitated the subsequent transfer to running financing in national insurance in 1948.

Social assistance governed by Poor Law already played an entirely marginal role in the 1930s. This was for two reasons. First, because the development of social insurance provided a safety net for many people who in the past would have been dependent on the provision for the poor organised by the local communities; second, because the government had taken action to create special programmes for the long-term unemployed, who would otherwise have had to turn to social assistance for the poor. The most important of these was what was known as the state catering campaign. Although unlike insurance it was governed by the logic of social

46 KLUMPAR, Vladislav: *Sociální pojištění v době krise* [Social Insurance in the Time of the Great Depression]. Praha, Česká společnost národohospodářská 1933; HOUSER, Jaroslav: *Vývoj hornického pojištění: K bojům našich horníků za kapitalismu* [The Development of Miners’ Insurance: The Struggles of Our Miners under Capitalism]. Praha, ČSAV 1960.

47 See SOTTNER, Bohumil: *Novelizace nemocenského pojištění* [The Reform of Health Insurance]. In: *Obzor národohospodářský*, Vol. 38 (1933), p. 602; KLUMPAR, V.: *Sociální pojištění v době krise*; HOUSER, J.: *Vývoj hornického pojištění*.

48 In 1936, the Minister of Social Care spoke in this context of nearly 10 billion Czechoslovak Crowns (see NEČAS, Jaromír: *20 let sociální péče v Československé republice* [20 Years of Social Care in the Czechoslovak Republic]. Praha, Ministerstvo sociální péče 1938, p. 49).

assistance for the poor, in the sense that the criterion for a claim was demonstrable social need, it was entirely separate from poor law provisions and an independent tool of social protection.

More fundamental changes in the system of social protection came only after the Munich Agreement of September 1938 in connection with the flight of part of the Czech population from the annexed borderlands and the fast changing *raison d'état* in the Second Republic and the subsequent Protectorate era. On the one hand, we can trace elements of clear continuity with the First Republic. No fundamental changes were adopted to change the system of social insurance or social assistance for the poor in this period. War economy brought with it the administrative regulation of wages – partly to motivate workers in war production, and partly as a result of inflation. The rates of pensions from social insurance also had to react to the growth of price levels. In this context, changes in benefit schemes sometimes failed to take into account the need to ensure adequate coverage of costs by maintaining the balance between income and outgoings. The rich capital resources of the insurance companies also attracted efforts to exploit them for the war effort by means of bonds and other financial instruments.

Otherwise there were no formal changes to the corporate structure of social insurance, inherited from the First Republic. In practice, however, there were substantial real changes. The top-ups by the state to assess insurance benefits essentially gave preference to low-income pensioners, thus increasing the egalitarian trends in insurance that were at odds with its corporate logic.⁴⁹ The average worker pension in the Czech Lands grew 2.6 times from 1939 to 1944, and in 1947 was already six times as much as in 1939. In contrast, white-collar pensions grew in the same time periods only by ten, and ninety percent respectively. If we consider development in the period from 1944 to 1947, worker pensions rose by 123 percent while white-collar pensions by only 62 percent. An even more thorough levelling of benefits took place in health insurance.⁵⁰ This growing egalitarianism is something we can regard as the main continual feature initiated in the period of German occupation; it continued in an undiminished form after 1945, thus creating the preconditions for the easier demolition of the traditional Bismarckian insurance and its replacement by a more egalitarian model of national insurance in 1948.

49 For more detail on the development of insurance in the two parts of Czechoslovakia during the war, see WERNER, Vladimír: *Národní pojištění: Vznik a podstata sociálního pojištění a jeho přebudování na pojištění národní* [National Insurance: The Origins and Basis of Social Insurance and its Reconstruction into National Insurance]. Praha, Universum 1947, pp. 27–49; see also *Dvacet let Ústřední sociální pojišťovny* [Twenty Years of the Central Social Insurance Institution]. Praha, Ústřední sociální pojišťovna 1946, pp. 13–19.

50 *Národní archiv* [The National Archives of the Czech Republic] (Praha), fond Úřad předsednictva vlády, běžná spisovna, karton 751, Důvodová zpráva k návrhu zákona o sjednocení některých předpisů o veřejnoprávním sociálním pojištění [f. The Office of the Government, box 751, Explanatory Memorandum on the Proposal of the Law on Uniting Some of the Regulations on Public Social Insurance].

Of its very nature, the existing ration economy, which lasted in Czechoslovakia right up till the end of May 1953, involved clear equalising tendencies. While at first sight this may seem unexpected, even the black market can be seen, to a certain extent, as a levelling factor. The profits made from this illicit business by small farmers and tradesman should not be over-estimated; the group of profiteers making huge profits from black market speculation was relatively small, while the incomes of better situated people, who could afford purchases on the black market, were being devalued by its several-hundred-percent higher prices.

More interesting and from the point of view of the subsequent development more important were the elements of discontinuity. Housing policy found itself on the border between continuity and discontinuity. Despite the fact that rent regulation and government powers to interfere in the ownership rights of house owners had lasted throughout the whole interwar period, their gradual erosion had been a political maxim. It was first necessary to secure housing for the refugees after Munich, and this led for example to the issue of Order No. 228/1938 on special housing care measures, which included a prohibition on excessive raising of rents. The First Republic regulations on rents were later replaced under the Protectorate by Government Order No. 177/1940. During the war, government organs could intervene in the case of newly negotiated rents and insist on locally usual rents with an eye to prices regulated in the same manner. These procedures followed from the general policy of control of consumption and prices. This price policy was not, however, evenly spread. This is because a situation familiar from the time of the First World War had started to emerge, with rent controls leading to rents lagging behind the other regulated prices. In 1945, the index of the growth of living costs in comparison with March 1939 (100 points) was 149.8, points for food, 147.5 for heating, 212.1 for clothing, but only 118.9 for rent. The overall index of living costs rose over the same period to 169.7 points. It is thus clear that the growth of rents was far below the average, compared to the other living costs.⁵¹ The differences were far greater in practice and this trend was to continue after 1945.

Discontinuity with the situation before 1938 was most strikingly obvious in the field of employment policy. The setting up of labour camps by Order No. 223/1938 opened the door to criticism stating that the measures were inadequate and that more radical steps should be taken. However, in what direction? The answer is given for example by an opinion of the time printed in the trade union paper *Hlas práce* [Voice of Labour]: “We are in favour of work obligation being made compulsory for all citizens in our republic, but this obligation must be imposed on everyone and not just on those that are registered or being de-registered at the health insurance

51 For the cited data, see: MUSILOVÁ, Dana: Byty a úroveň bydlení v letech 1939–1945: Příspěvek k výzkumu každodennosti [Flats and the Standard of Housing in the Years 1939–1945: A Contribution to Research on Everyday Life]. In: *Sborník k dějinám 19. a 20. století*, No. 12. Praha, Historický ústav ČSAV 1991, pp. 91–104, here p. 102; see also KRÁL, Václav: *Otázky hospodářského a sociálního vývoje v českých zemích v letech 1938–1945* [Questions of Economic and Social Development in the Bohemian Lands in the Years 1938–1945], Vol. 3. Praha, Československá akademie věd 1959, pp. 151 and 207.

institutions.”⁵² Moreover, not only unemployed workers should be forced to work, but everyone deemed on the basis of a political or administrative judgement to be parasiting on the labour of others. The article does not say who specifically is meant, but it was precisely this way of conceiving the direction of labour measures that was opening the door to the repression of people who in subsequent decades would be given the tendentious labels of the time: speculators, rentiers, bourgeois and suchlike. The Second Republic’s slogan, “small, but our own” also found its reflection in employment policy, as eloquently documented by one of the circulars of the Trades Union Association of Czechoslovakia in December 1938, in which we read: “The principle of the state’s new economy must be that no head or hand that is capable of work should be idle. The obligation to work is just a consequence of the right to work, which must be secured.”⁵³ The idea of national self-preservation thus became bound up with the necessity to secure work for the refugees, and this opened the door to administrative control of the labour market and the widespread exploitation of repressive methods to achieve employment goals. A direct continuous line leads from these Second Republic declarations to the wartime and postwar measures, including communist employment policy after 1948.

From the labour camps mentioned above it was but a small step to the introduction of universal labour obligations in 1939 (Government Order No. 190/1939 and No. 195/1939). For its effective implementation, reforms facilitating the administrative direction of the labour market was instigated: the setting up of labour offices (Government Order No. 193/1939 and the Decree No. 202/1939) and the re-introduction of labour books (abolished in 1919 because of their extreme unpopularity among workers) to ensure the registration and distribution of the labour force needed for war production. All these procedures remained a standard part of labour law even after 1945, although the labour offices were renamed because of their universal unpopularity. During the war, employment, which had traditionally fallen under private (civil) law, was shifted ever further into the sphere of public law. Symptomatically, misdemeanours against labour morale (employment rules, etc.) that are based on the contractual performance of work in a market economy and are handled as civil law delicts (claims for damages, reduction of wages, dismissal and so on), now often came under the jurisdiction of labour offices and were subject to the sanctions of public law (as administrative punishment and criminal law delicts).

Another factor that cannot be overlooked was the acceptance of a high degree of state intervention in the economic sphere. This was a trend that had already started in the 1930s when governments had been forced to resort to greater administrative interventions in order to cope with the economic crisis. War production then,

52 Pracovní tábory a zkušenosti s nimi [Labour Camps and Experiences with Them]. In: *Hlas práce*, Vol. 19, No. 23 (3 December 1938).

53 *Všeodborový archiv Českomoravské konfederace odborových svazů* [All-Union Archives of the Czecho-Moravian Confederation of Trades Unions] (Praha), fond Staré odborové spolky, Odborové sdružení československé, karton 454, signatura 453/6470, oběžník OSČ z prosince 1938 [Old Trade Unions, Czechoslovak Trade Union Associations, box 454, sign. 453/6470, circular of 1938].

by its very nature, involved central direction. This directive “state socialism” had been rapidly eliminated after the end of the First World War, but there was general agreement on the need to retain it after the Second World War. In their analysis of economic-political elites, Drahomír Jančík and Tomáš Kalina eloquently observe in this context that: “Everyone was fully aware of the impossibility of a simple return to the economic system of the First Republic, and shared the general belief that the new economic system must be purged of all the maladies of the past, especially economic crises and unemployment.”⁵⁴ Economic planning and the expansion of state ownership of the means of production in the Third Republic helped to create its character and also generated favourable conditions for the reduction of personal freedom and related respect for individual rights. In this context, we can agree with the Czech historian Antonie Doležalová, who argues that from the economic point of view “the trend after the war in 1945, and then 1948, was a logical continuation of the preceding years.”⁵⁵

Havelka’s comment, cited above, on the increasingly mass character of Czech society, also alerts us to the psychological dimension of war in the form of both individual and collective frustration. This frustration changes in collective action – it strengthens collective solidarity, just as it intensifies the sense of a distinction between “us” and “them.” For nations actively fighting to preserve themselves, the experience of war brings a consolidation of consciousness of national solidarity and therefore a readiness for solid collective action in the framework of the national whole. This psychological shift consequently facilitates deep social-political reforms when the war is over. The British war experience corresponds best to this model, but we can also diagnose similarities in the case of Czech society. In my other works, I have tried to show that this psychological shift was visible on both sides of the war barricade, and indeed even in countries not directly participating in military action.⁵⁶ This is also why I have used the periodization of “the long 1930s,” which makes it easier to identify the way in which both the Great Depression and the war pushed society in the same direction. Unlike the conventional periodization based

54 JANČÍK, Drahomír – KALINA, Tomáš: Národohospodářské elity politických stran na počátku přechodu k plánovanému řízení československé ekonomiky (1945–1946) [The National-Economic Elites of the Political Parties at the Beginning of the Transition to the Planned Direction of Czechoslovak Economy (1945–1946)]. In: KOKOŠKOVÁ, Zdeňka – KOCIAN, Jiří – KOKOŠKA, Stanislav: *Československo na rozhraní dvou epoch nesvobody: Sborník z konference k 60. výročí druhé světové války* [Czechoslovakia between Two Epochs of Oppression: Proceedings of a Conference of the 60th Anniversary of the Second World War]. Praha, Národní archiv – Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2005, pp. 92–99, here p. 93.

55 DOLEŽALOVÁ, Antonie: Nebylo úniku? Kontinuita a diskontinuita v ekonomickém vývoji ve 30. a 40. letech XX. století [Was There No Escape? Continuity and Discontinuity in Economic Development in the 1930s and 1940s]. In: ŠEDIVÝ, Ivan – NĚMEČEK, Jan – KOCIAN, Jiří – TŮMA, Oldřich (ed.): *Československo a krize demokracie ve střední Evropě ve 30. a 40. letech XX. století: Hledání východisek* [Czechoslovakia and the Crisis of Democracy in Central Europe in the 1930s and 1940s: Looking for Starting Points]. Praha, Historický ústav AV ČR 2010, pp. 461–477, here p. 461.

56 NOHA, J. – RÁKOSNÍK, J.: *Kapitalismus na kolenou*, end of the book.

on the distinction between totalitarian and democratic regimes it does not allow us to forget their common features, arising from their confrontation with similar problems generated in the modernising process. The Swedish *volkshempolitik*, the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaftspolitik*, the new social liberalism of the American New Deal, the Soviet concept of a classless society, and in the same way intensified Czech nationalism with striking egalitarian elements, all express this transnational trend. This scarcely means that the regimes in question were identical. What is common to all, however, was on the one hand the strengthening of conscious solidarity between the people included in society – and on the other (admittedly in very different degrees, if we take into account the Nazi project of the Holocaust as an extreme form of social exclusion), the exclusion of those deemed not to belong to this community.⁵⁷

These psychological shifts were expressed in the Czech environment on several different levels. Firstly, there were campaigns to stimulate efforts to ensure national self-preservation, feverishly urged during the war by the London government-in-exile and by the political representatives of the Protectorate. Secondly, after the war, retributive legislation provided the means to identify and exclude collaborators from the national community. Thirdly, the Protectorate, the Reich and later the people's-democratic legislation of the Third Republic painstakingly distinguished between Germans and Czechs, or a Slav identity. Fourthly, the nationalisation decrees of October 1945 clearly separated the haute bourgeoisie from the rest of the national community. At this point, we might recall the insight of the older historical literature, which in the context of the war argued that there was a strong trend to the social levelling of Czech society by the demolition of the two opposite extremes of social stratification (the richest via nationalisation and the expropriation of collaborators, and the poorest via a faster growth of wages during the year and postwar allocations of expropriated property).⁵⁸ Finally, we bear in mind one more universal and important psychological aspect of war, which is the expectation of the population that all the suffering and sacrifice should not prove meaningless and that when the slaughter and misery is over, a better and more just world will emerge.⁵⁹

57 On the racial discrimination implicit in Roosevelt's new social legislation, see POOLE, Mary: *The Segregated Origins of Social Security: African Americans and the Welfare State*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press 2006. On Swedish eugenic practices, continuing even after the war, see BROBERG, Gunnar – ROLL-HANSEN, Nils (ed.): *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Stabilization Policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland*. East Lansing, Michigan State University Press 2005.

58 See KAPLAN, Karel: *Nekrvavá revoluce* [The Bloodless Revolution]. Praha, Mladá fronta 1993, p. 45.

59 For more detail, see RÁKOSNÍK, J.: Volby 1946 jako výraz organizované modernity a národního konsenzu (conference paper, forthcoming). On the transformational dimension of the world wars, see MARWICK, Arthur: *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States*. London, Macmillan 1974. In relation to Czech conditions, Bradley F. Abrams has touched on Marwick's conceptualisation in his book *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the*

Postwar Social Security: Bismarck, Beveridge, or Stalin?

From the point of view of the development of social policy, the period bounded by the years 1945 and 1956 is distinguished by one outstanding feature – its radical discontinuity. On the one hand, as has been suggested in the preceding section, there was manifest continuity with the Protectorate period in the field of employment or housing policy, and with the pre-war period in the sphere of social insurance. On the other hand, Czechoslovakia experienced three “social regimes” in quick succession in the ten years after 1945, which is a very unusual phenomenon.⁶⁰ The original Bismarckian model persisted up to 1948, but its earnings-related principles were being rapidly eroded by the levelling of benefits that we have mentioned. National insurance was introduced in 1948, and this – however much the legislators avoided admitting the fact for obvious reasons⁶¹ – exhibited certain similarities with Beveridge’s reform in Britain (Law No. 99/1948.). The year 1951 saw the initiation of the process of so-called reconstruction of national insurance, social security of Soviet type became a model (Law No. 101/1951), and this trend culminated in the reforms of 1956 (Laws No. 54/1956 and No. 55/1956).

Despite social legislation, which typically has a tendency (especially at the level of regulations pursuant to laws) to change quickly, the general evolutionary trends of social policy usually show long-term stability and dependence on the preceding development (*path dependence*). This usual pattern does not, however, apply to the period under consideration, in which there were rapid successive changes not only of legal regulations but of the fundamental long-term operating principles of social policy and its implementation. The system of the First Republic was governed by corporatist and equivalence (earnings-related benefits) principles. The corporatist principle, which has been explained above, meant the existence of different rules for different groups of workers. The equivalence principle was based on the logic of earned entitlement and not on need.⁶² According to this principle, benefits are

Rise of Communism. Lanham (Maryland) – Boulder (Colorado) – New York – Toronto – Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield 2004, pp. 13–20.

60 On the concept of *welfare regime*, see ESPING-ANDERSEN, Gøsta: *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1990, p. 2. The author created what is today evidently the most popular typology of welfare states: liberal, conservative and social democratic. The Bismarckian model more or less corresponds to Esping-Andersen’s conservative welfare state.

61 National insurance was an important tool for the legitimisation of the February takeover in 1948, and so it was not desirable for the KSČ [the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia] to emphasise its Western origin (see *Společná česko-slovenská digitální parlamentní knihovna, Ústavodárné národní shromáždění 1946–1948, Stenoprotokoly*, 103. schůze, 14. 4. 1948, vystoupení poslance Evžena Erbana [Speech by the Communist Deputy Evžen Erban in Parliament on 14 April 1948], available at www.psp.cz/eknih/1948uns/103schuze).

62 Sometimes we also speak of the principle of equivalence in this context. Vojtěch Krebs defines it precisely: “The concept of equivalence in itself means equality. [...] In social policy, the principle of equivalence is often applied particularly in insurance systems and here it is interpreted more as a principle of equivalence to individual input or productivity/performance.

supposed to be based on the level of the individual's contributions to the system as far as possible and this is usually derived from the level of insurance paid. Before the war what applied was essentially the equivalence rule that the average pension of "white-collar" workers in the private sector amounted to roughly five times the average worker's pension. Of course, an analogical ratio existed between contributions to the system: white-collar insurance cost the insured employee roughly five times more. The process of levelling was started off during the war and when the war was over the National Front consistently continued in this policy, particularly by Law No. 158/1945 on the revision and enlargement of the classes in public law social insurance, the levelling consequences of which have already been mentioned here.

This strategy on the part of the governments of the Third Republic had its own rationale. Firstly, state treasury started to make a greater contribution to the pensions paid out in response to the financial exhaustion of the insurance institutions, and in the socially reformist atmosphere of postwar society and a situation where state funds were limited it was easier to defend egalitarianism than to maintain the privileges of the more affluent classes, whose pensions would have been raised significantly if the principle of equivalence had it been applied, and with funds from the state budget. Secondly, the dominance of the left-orientated parties in the National Front naturally conduced more to the rapid growth in workers' benefits than to the protection of more affluent groups. In the clash between the two principles – securing an elementary living standard for all recipients of insurance benefits and taking into account who had contributed more to the insurance system in the past – the first principle took clear priority for all these reasons. Thirdly, what is more, the National Front was in agreement on the need to speed up legislation introducing national insurance. The basic idea of national insurance, as it was born in wartime Britain, was radically egalitarian, although it was ultimately not realised in Czechoslovakia in 1948 in extreme form. Essentially, none of the Third Republic's political forces, interest organisations or even the insurance institutions, whose days were already numbered, had an interest in preserving Bismarckian principles. In any case, the insurance institutions were already significantly dependent on subsidies from the state budget by this point and their management preferred to maintain their financial stability by this route than to make probably vain efforts to secure, in the spirit of the principle of equivalence, an adequate increase in the benefits of those who had paid higher premiums in the past.

This challenge to Bismarckian principles opened the door to the application of the Beveridgean conception. During the war, the London-based Czechoslovak government-in-exile had taken note of Beveridge's project. In basic features its ideas entirely conformed to the conception that was born in the circles of the left-orientated home

It assumes that the distribution of pensions, goods, conditions and so forth to individual should be equal (correspondent) to their own performance, work contribution," (KREBS, Vojtěch et al.: *Solidarita a ekvivalence v sociálních systémech* [Solidarity and Equivalence in Social Systems]. Praha, Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí 2009, p. 12).

resistance.⁶³ The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia itself had no clearly formulated conception of social policy, as is obvious for example from the propositions of the future so-called Košice Government Programme worked out at the end of March 1945 in Moscow.⁶⁴ The egalitarianism and universality of Beveridgean national insurance were, however, easy for the Communists to accept. The dissensions between the parties of the National Front, which later grew during the year 1947 over questions of future social policy as well, related to secondary questions of the realisation of insurance and its organisation, but not to its basic idea. The draft laws were ready by the beginning of 1948. The brakes were put on their progress in the government by the political crisis of February but since the Communists had no alternative proposals for new social legislation of their own, and that the originally proposed conception was in principle acceptable to them and furthermore that they now needed to legitimise their newly acquired monopoly of power, they used these existing propositions and with just minor changes had them approved by the Constitutive National Assembly in mid-April 1948 (Law No. 99/1948). It is fair to say that national insurance fulfilled the idea of social security (mentioned in the introduction) as it had been formulated during the 1930s and 1940s, by its attempt at universal personal coverage and broad material protection against key social events from which citizens needed to be protected. If the concept of the welfare state is to be identified with the idea of social security, as I tried to outline it in the first section of this article, then we can suggest that Czechoslovakia became a welfare state with this law, and this was further underlined by the new Constitution of 9 May, which for the first time guaranteed a number of economic and social rights at constitutional level. Here, I have devoted attention only to the sphere of insurance, but it should not be forgotten that increasing access to education for the lower classes and improving the quality of medical care were also parts of the postwar reform.

Czechoslovak national insurance was far from being as egalitarian as William Beveridge had envisaged in his model. Beveridge's model involved an obligatory and strictly egalitarian first pillar of the insurance system, while the second pillar (*occupational pensions*) and the third pillar (commercial additional) were based on the principle of voluntarism and took maximum account of the equivalence (earnings-related) principle. The Czechoslovak model was based on the first pil-

63 For more detail on this subject, see KALINOVÁ, Lenka: *Východiska, očekávání a realita poválečné doby: K dějinám české společnosti v letech 1945–1948* [Starting-Points, Expectations and the Reality of the Postwar Era: The History of Czech Society in the Years 1945–1948]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2004.

64 See KLIMEŠ, Miloš – LESJUK, Petr – MALÁ, Irena – PREČAN, Vilém (ed.): *Cesta ke Květnu: Vznik lidové demokracie v Československu* [The Road to May: The Origins of People's Democracy in Czechoslovakia], Vol. I/1. Praha, Nakladatelství ČSAV 1965, pp. 410–425, Document No. 132 – Minutes of the discussions of representatives of the three socialist parties and representatives of the People's Party in the 6th–16th chapter of the proposal for the new government programme and the proposal for the structure of the new Czechoslovak government, 24 March 1945.

lar in a dual-component pension: the first component was a guaranteed basic minimum, and the second had the accent on equivalence. In the new conception of social protection, the second and third pillar, defined in their time as pension improvements and the heritage of the past, gradually dropped out of sight and were finally eliminated in the 1950s. Thus, Czechoslovak national insurance was not as levelling as the British version, but was still far more egalitarian than the First Republic's Bismarckian insurance. This was not only because it continued in the trend by which workers' benefits converged with those of other categories of employees, but also because it liquidated the separate organisational structures of individual corporations and included all the insured in a unified system – including self-employed persons, who had not had insurance under the First Republic. The whole trend culminated in 1950 with the abolition of the traditional social provision for state employees that had developed from the times of Maria Theresia, and their inclusion in the standard insurance regime (Law No. 66/1950).

So long as the levelling was at the expense of classes that were not among the usual voter base of the KSČ, the Communists vehemently supported it. In the years 1949 and 1950, however, the leading functionaries of the Communist Party voiced ever more frequent criticisms of national insurance, which in their view needed to become a tool for building a socialist economy faster. They considered it right that the funds of the Central National Insurance Institution should no longer function as loan capital for development projects as had happened between the two world wars, but thought that insurance ought to, on the one hand, offer advantages to employees in priority sectors and, on the other, motivate older people to remain in employment, thus increasing the labour force necessary for the chosen method of extensive economic development based primarily on the quantitative growth of production capacities and not on the intensification of work. This criticism was finally to find expression first in Law No. 102/1951 on the reconstruction of national insurance. It related purely to the organisational structure and not to benefit schemes, but attention came round to these in subsequent years. The basic insurance principle was progressively undermined (premiums were merged with tax payments from wages) as was the autonomous administrative structure (The Central National Insurance Institution). In 1956, Czechoslovakia finally adopted the Soviet model of three work categories into which all employees were divided.

By 1956, then, Czechoslovak social insurance had to a considerable extent been turned into "sovietised" social security, as it had been developed in the Soviet Union between the wars. Expressed in the title of this section, Bismarck was first supplanted by Beveridge, who was then supplanted by Stalin. Although in the introduction I mentioned a range of relatively new historical studies containing a large amount of empirical material, the theme of the development of social policy is far from entirely exhausted. Indeed, the economic dimension of social policy, to which Czech historiography has devoted only minimal attention, remains a wide open field for future research. So, too, does the effect of social legislation on everyday practice, including the strategies adopted by specific recipients of benefits and

services, which for example the American sociologist Lynne Haney tried to analyse more than ten years ago in the case of socialist Hungary.⁶⁵

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65 HANEY, Lynne A.: *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*. Berkeley, University of California Press 2002.

“It Will Not Work without a Social Policy!”¹

*Research on Social Policy Practice on the Territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia*²

Radka Šustrová

When Marie-Luise Recker was working on her dissertation on social policy in Nazi Germany during the Second World War, she was confronted with a very difficult question: how far can one speak of a social policy at all in the context of the Third Reich, where the complex of social measures was clearly saturated with racial ideology and where social policy was subordinated to this ideology in practice as well as in theory?³ On the Czech side, the historian Dana Ševcová-Musilová faced the same basic problem in her research on workers in the metal industry, coming up against the fact that “on the one hand, the Nazis were planning the final solution of the Czech Question, but on the other were trying to create the illusion of

1 I would like to thank Lu Seegers, Jan Vajskebr, David Hubený and Ondřej Cinkajzl for critical comments on the text. For the quote in the title, I used the title of the article “Ohne Sozialpolitik geht es nicht!,” published in *Monatshefte für NS-Sozialpolitik*, Vol. 6, No. 1–2 (1939), p. 4.

2 This article was researched and written with the support of the Grant Agency of Charles University as part of Project No. 617/012 “Changes in Family Policy from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia to the People’s Democratic Czechoslovakia, 1939–1989.”

3 RECKER, Marie-Luise: *Nationalsozialistische Sozialpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. München, Oldenbourg 1985.

normal life in the Protectorate.”⁴ In other words, the Nazi equivalent of the British Beveridge Plan had the avowed aim of providing what was, in a sense, equal material security for the people, but only on condition that they met certain racial criteria. Social support and welfare were not designed for all, and this generates a paradoxical connection between a racist dictatorship with tendencies to harsh political repression and efforts to satisfy the social demands of a relatively large part of the population. The generally positive sounding expression “social policy” as we know it today seems not to belong to the vocabulary that we use when we speak of Nazism and Nazi occupation. Yet, this impression can be over-simplifying. Under the Nazis, social policy was an important mobilising element which by means of preference for selected social groups determined what society was and who, in fact, was part of it. In the context of the original German territory (*Altreich*), according to Recker, we can speak straightforwardly of the prioritisation of the German population as recipients of welfare, but this concept is rather less clear and obvious when applied to the extent and distribution of social support on the territory of many occupied European countries.

Czech historiography has hitherto shown remarkably little interest in social policy in the period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and where it has touched on the subject, it has seen it virtually exclusively as “social demagoguery” in the context of the efforts of Nazi Germany to germanise the (Czech) population of the Protectorate.⁵ What is still the most extensive historiographical contribution on Protectorate social policy is to be found in Václav Král’s ambitiously conceived attempt at a comprehensive account of social and economic development on the territory of Bohemia and Moravia in the years 1938–1945,⁶ written as far back as in the late 1950s. The three-volume work is heavily ideologically freighted, and apart from its main argument on the subjugation of the working class by the occupation regime, its value is diminished by its confusing structure and reliance on statistics that are extremely hard to verify. Several shorter accounts of social and economic changes in the period were published after Král’s trilogy,⁷ but the subject of social

4 ŠEVECOVÁ-MUSILOVÁ, Dana: *Sociální postavení kovoprůmyslového dělnictva v letech nacistické okupace českých zemí* [The Social Position of the Workers in the Metal Industry in the Years of Nazi Occupation of the Czech Lands]. Praha, Ústav československých a světových dějin ČSAV 1989, p. 36.

5 For a systematic account of germanising practices, and ideas for the solution of the “Czech Question,” based mainly in soil and colonisation policy, see BRANDES, Detlef: *“Umvolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandsaufnahme”: NS-“Volkstumspolitik” in den böhmischen Ländern* (Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, Vol. 125). München, Oldenbourg 2012.

6 KRÁL, Václav: *Otázky hospodářského a sociálního vývoje v českých zemích v letech 1938–1945* [Questions of Economic and Social Development in the Czech Lands 1938–1945], Vol. 1–3. Praha, Československá akademie věd 1957–1959.

7 See HOUSER, Jaroslav: Die nazistische Ideologie und die Sozial Politik zur Zeit der Okkupation der Tschechoslowakei. In: *Anzeiger der phil.-historischen Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1967), pp. 174–193; PRŮCHA, Václav: *Změny v sociální struktuře československé společnosti v letech 1938–1945* [Changes in the Social Structure of Czech Society 1938–1945]. Praha, Vysoká škola ekonomická 1970; *Přehled*

policy under the Protectorate was only significantly taken up rather later by Miroslav Kárný and Dana Ševcová-Musilová, and in recent years in highly specialised studies written by Lenka Kalinová and Jakub Rákosník.

The most frequent line of interpretation is to see the existence of social policy measures on the territory of the Protectorate as an attempt to *confuse*, or even *seduce* Czechs away from their Czech national identity to which they had previously been unshakeably faithful, and to regard Reinhard Heydrich (in keeping with his reputation as the creator of “positive policy”) as the main protagonist of this demagogic strategy. It was in the spirit of this interpretation that Miroslav Kárný, for example, tried to show that German officials were unreliable in their work with statistical data on trends in wages, prices and living standards; his aim was to use specific cases to refute the idea that the Heydrich era brought an improvement in the material position of the working class in the Protectorate.⁸ Kárný seems to have been trying to get rid of persisting myths about the prosperity of workers under Heydrich rather than getting to grips with real social political practice in the Protectorate.

The subject of social policy in the Protectorate was tackled with greater detachment and far more comprehensively by Dana Ševcová-Musilová, who attempted to provide an account of social policy measures of the time as an integrated whole in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Ševcová-Musilová was not only interested in the politics of employment, but also posed questions related to housing and health. Her studies are still constructed around the conventional interpretative model of struggle between Czechs and Germans in the field of social policy – a struggle won by the Czechs because they could see through the trap laid by the Nazis – but there is no denying that her analyses show a concern and effort to analyse the socio-economic development in a broader context. On the other hand, Ševcová-Musilová like her predecessor offers what is simply a standard and essentially stereotypical narrative, and tends always to judge social-political measures from the perspective of the planned “solution to the Czech problem.” Hence, according to Ševcová-Musilová, the occupation authorities were pursuing three basic goals in their application of social policy in the Protectorate: first, to ensure the smooth running of production in the Protectorate; second, to attract working-class supporters through demagogy; and third, to remove all the social benefits that the workers had won under the interwar Czechoslovak Republic.⁹ In the light of the current

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- hospodářského vývoje Československa v letech 1918–1945* [An Overview of the Economic Development of Czechoslovakia 1918–1945]. Praha, Státní nakladatelství politické literatury 1961.
- 8 See KÁRNÝ, Miroslav: K otázce sociální demagogie v Heydrichově protektorátní politice [The Question of Social Demagogy in Heydrich’s Protectorate Policy]. In: *Slezský sborník*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (1984), pp. 1–22; IDEM: Hlavní rysy okupační politiky Reinharda Heydricha [Main Features of the Occupation Policy of Reinhard Heydrich]. In: KÁRNÝ, Miroslav – MILOTOVÁ, Jaroslava – KÁRNÁ, Margita (ed.): *Protektorátní politika Reinharda Heydricha* [The Protectorate Policy of Reinhard Heydrich]. Praha, Tisková, ediční a propagační služba 1991, pp. 5–53.
- 9 ŠEVECOVÁ, Dana: Sociální politika nacistů v takzvaném protektorátu v letech 1939–1945 a její vliv na postavení českých pracujících [The Social Policy of the Nazis in the So-Called Pro-

state of research, one cannot but agree with her identification of the first goal, but the other two goals are more questionable, symptomatic of the oversimplifying view of Czech historiography. Unfortunately, Ševcová-Musilová did not integrate her other specialised but diverse smaller studies into a comprehensive treatment of the whole subject but for overall interpretative purposes stuck to the theme of the working class in the metal industry.¹⁰

Wartime social policy, or more precisely political thinking on social questions, has been considered more recently by Lenka Kalinová in her analysis of the ideas of the home resistance on the future social-political programme of a liberated Czechoslovakia.¹¹ While opening up the theme of social policy, this study attaches it firmly to what is the traditional subject of most academic studies on the history of the Protectorate, i.e. the resistance and its ideological development. Meanwhile, Jakub Rákosník's work on the postwar development of social policy pays more attention to continuities with the pre-WWII years than to the Protectorate period as a prelude.¹² A survey of the state of historiographic treatment of the topic up to now thus highlights the absence of any systematic account of the development of social policy in the years 1938/1939 to 1945. It also shows the lack of much discernible efforts to set the history of the Protectorate in wider Reich German context,¹³ and

tectorate in 1939–1945 and Its Influence on the Position of Czech Workers]. In: *Dějiny socialistického Československa: Studie a dokumenty*, Vol. 7: *Ke 40. výročí osvobození Československa sovětskou armádou* [For the 40th Anniversary of the Liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army]. Praha, Ústav československých a světových dějin ČSAV 1985, p. 170.

- 10 See IDEM: *Sociální postavení kovoprůmyslového dělnictva v letech nacistické okupace českých zemí*; IDEM: *Byty a úroveň bydlení v letech 1939–1945: Příspěvek k výzkumu každodennosti* [Apartments and the Standard of Housing in 1939–1945: A Contribution to Research on Everyday Life]. In: *Sborník k dějinám 19. a 20. století* [Proceedings on the History of the 19th and 20th Century], Vol. 12. Praha, Historický ústav ČSAV 1991, pp. 91–104; IDEM: *Zásobování a výživa českého obyvatelstva v podmínkách válečného řízeného hospodářství (1939–1945)* [Supply and the Nutrition of the Czech Population in the Conditions of a War Economy 1939–1945]. In: *Slezský sborník*, Vol. 89, No. 3–4 (1991), pp. 255–266.
- 11 KALINOVÁ, Lenka: *Východiska, očekávání a realita poválečné doby: K dějinám české společnosti v letech 1945–1948* [Starting-Points, Expectations and the Reality of the Postwar Period: On the History of Czech Society in the Years 1945–1948]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2004.
- 12 See RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub: *Sověťzace sociálního státu: Lidově demokratický režim a sociální práva občanů v Československu 1945–1960* [The Sovietisation of the Social State: The People's Democratic Regime and the Social Rights of Citizens in Czechoslovakia 1945–1960]. Praha, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy 2010; IDEM: *Dlouhá 30. léta (1929–1945): Konceptuální přístupy k transformaci modernity* [The Long 1930s (1929–1945): Conceptual Approaches to the Transformation of Modernity]. In: *Dějiny – teorie – kritika*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2010), pp. 222–238.
- 13 The only attempt so far to consider Protectorate and Reich conditions together is the most recent work of Jaromír Balcar and Jaroslav Kučera on the economic development of the Czech Lands from the Second Republic to People's Democratic Czechoslovakia: BALCAR, Jaromír – KUČERA, Jaroslav: *Von der Rüstammer des Reiches zum Maschinenwerk des Sozialismus: Wirtschaftslenkung in Böhmen und Mähren 1938 bis 1953*. (Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, Vol. 128). Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2013.

a great deal of work will be necessary to overcome the bifurcation of historical perspectives on the Czech (Protectorate) and German (Reich) context.¹⁴ Although research studies sometimes suggest the close connection between social policy and the desire to remould society, it is somewhat irritating that no historians have put forward even tentative hints of the form of these social engineering strategies – except for one, and that is Germanisation.

We can conclude that the main shortcomings of Czech historiography with regard to social policy in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia are a certain monotony of argumentation, the absence of systematic interpretation, and a strict limitation of focus on the ethnically Czech population (in fact just the Czech working class).¹⁵ These striking limits of Czech, or Czechoslovak, historiography were pointed out as early as in the 1960s by the historian Jan Tesař in his critique of the conception behind Tomáš Pasák’s one-sided analysis of the Protectorate occupation policy. Tesař drew attention to ambiguities and above all to other possible levels of interpretation that historians had previously entirely overlooked.¹⁶ At the centre of this dispute was the interpretation of the career of the former legionary, General of the Czechoslovak Army and Prime Minister of the Protectorate Government Alois Eliáš, who tacked and manoeuvred on the border between his official position and service to the occupation regime and his illegal cooperation with the home resistance movement, for which he was executed in 1942. Tesař and Pasák’s “dispute over Eliáš” focused on the topic of collaboration, but it also said much about the basic interpretational schemata employed by most historians dealing with the Protectorate to this day. Although there have undeniably been a number of new and thought-provoking contributions to the history of the Czech Lands in the time of the German occupation, Tesař’s critique is still essentially valid and can be applied to the

14 The only exceptions in this respect are the texts by Jaroslav Houser, which try to consider the Protectorate in this kind of broader context (HOUSER, Jaroslav: *Die nazistische Ideologie und die Sozial Politik zur Zeit der Okupation der Tschechoslowakei*).

15 Intensification of production and the consequent redistribution of work positions meant that there was an undoubted increase in the number of workers in manual professions, especially after the issue of the decree on work mobilisation in February 1943. Research on the workers might thus cover a very large group of population living on Protectorate territory (or coming from the Protectorate in the case of transferred labour in the Reich), that could practically be regarded as “Protectorate society.” This research direction would, however, very probably have to relinquish in advance any focus on the national (ethnic) aspects of Protectorate reality.

16 See the debate between Jan Tesař and Tomáš Pasák on the pages of the journal *Dějiny a současnost* in 1968: TESÁŘ, Jan: “Záchrana národa a kolaborace” [“The Saving of the Nation and Collaboration”]. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 10, No. 5 (May 1968), pp. 5–9 (reprinted in: TESÁŘ: *Traktát o “záchrane národa”: Texty z let 1967–1969 o začátku německé okupace* [Tract on the “Saving of the Nation”: Texts from 1967–1969 on the Beginning of the German Occupation]. Praha, Triáda 2006, pp. 291–303); PASÁK, Tomáš: *Generál Eliáš a problémy kolaborace* [General Eliáš and the Problems of Collaboration]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (June 1968), pp. 33–37; TESÁŘ, Jan: *Spor o hrdinu naší doby* [The Dispute on the Hero of Our Time]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 9 (September 1968), p. 44. (reprinted in: TESÁŘ: *Traktát o “záchrane národa,”* pp. 304–307).

state of research on social policy as well as other areas. Lack of attention to social policy under the Protectorate, and what are at best over-simplifying interpretations where such measures are considered, has put serious limits on our understanding of Protectorate society.¹⁷ Even current research on social policy in the Protectorate lacks the openness to new questions that Tesař was trying to encourage.¹⁸

Of course, it is no easy task to describe the development of social policy on the territory of the Protectorate in a comprehensive way, let alone to interpret it. Social policy is a very large category. At the time, it was a developing field in the process of differentiation, and it was also systematically affected by many external factors that are difficult to fit into an analysis. The field includes family, educational and housing policy, healthcare, the politics of employment and forms and standards of social security, etc., while the transformation of the constitution, attempts to integrate the Protectorate into the Reich system, and the war to which all political, economic and cultural policy came progressively to be subordinated, represent just the basic aspects of the Protectorate period with an impact on that field. Social policy was not simply geared to ensuring the relatively unproblematic operation of the economy and meeting the basic, essential welfare needs of Protectorate society (for example, at least minimum health care); naturally the interests of the Nazi leadership went much further. During the Protectorate, the field of employment, i.e. the distribution of the labour force and employment policy,¹⁹ which after the economic crisis in the 1930s had been a highly sensitive part of the strategy of the state, was the highest-profile segment of social policy. The progressive and then complete eradication of unemployment in 1942 was supposed to demonstrate a success unprecedented in the preceding republic. Nazi social policy, very often spoken of in a way that elided or even identified it with work policy (*Arbeitspolitik*), was self-confidently presented as a policy benefiting all workers, and a policy in which socialism was a constitutive element.

The Nazi regime publicly declared National Socialism to be a synthesis of nationalism and socialism and German society to be the epitome of a community that

17 It should be admitted, however, that the production of basic overall factographic resources on the history of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, as attempted by Jan Gebhart and Jan Kuklík as part of their long-term research project, is essential in meeting the needs of future analyses of social and cultural aspects of the period (see GEBHART, Jan – KUKLÍK, Jan: *Velké dějiny země Koruny české* [Great History of the Bohemian Crown Lands], Vol. 15a and 15b. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka 2007).

18 See KUČERA, Jaroslav – ZIMMERMANN, Volker: Ke stavu českého výzkumu nacistické okupační politiky v Čechách a na Moravě: Několik úvah u příležitosti vydání jedné standardní publikace [On the State of Czech Research on Nazi Occupation Policy in Bohemia and Moravia: Some Thoughts on the Occasion of the Publication of One Standard Work]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2009), pp. 112–130. The standard work mentioned here is Gebhart and Kuklík's book on the history of the Protectorate.

19 See BECKER, Steffen: *Von der Werbung zum "Totaleinsatz": Die Politik der Rekrutierung von Arbeitskräften im "Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren" und der Aufenthalt tschechischer Zwangsarbeiter und arbeiterinnen im Dritten Reich 1939–1945*. This dissertation was published via the Berlin Internet Publisher site Dissertation.de in 2005 (www.dissertation.de).

placed the emphasis on equality and service to society.²⁰ Not that these elevated visions were ever turned into reality, however, or even intended very seriously. Social policy developed within clearly delineated boundaries and its positive role was confined just to a certain section of society. The planning and implementation of social policy was closely bound up with the period project known as “the national community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*),²¹ and it is important that historians, too, recognise this tight link with regard to the new constellation of social relations in the Reich and Protectorate. Position in the new set of social relations, and so in “the national community,” was decisive for access to social, material, political and cultural institutions and the advantages that they provided.

My intention in this article is not to try to give a condensed account of the main developments in the socio-economic field in the Protectorate and so offer an instant remedy for what for decades has been the unsatisfactory state of research on the subject. Instead, I simply wish to outline a possible research direction that could open up much more complicated but also, from the point of view of social history, much more fundamental questions than have been addressed so far. Analysis of social policy cannot only enable us to understand the forms and extent of particular measures, but also illuminate much about social transformation, whether directed from above or taking place in parallel and spontaneously within society. We can also ask questions about the effectiveness of the internal integrating power of the new social order: who was tolerated by the new system and who was denied access to the public network of social relations, and who got the chance to put forward his claims.

On the following pages, I shall first sketch out the social framework represented by the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* – which was the matrix in which ideas on the meaning and function of social policy were formed and implemented. I shall then move on to consider the substance of the concept of “social policy” in the form in which it was understood by Nazi theorists after 1933. Finally, I shall try to define the new social conditions and suggest potential ways of analysing them in the field of the actual implementation of social policy in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

20 This, probably the most banal interpretation of the social basis of Nazism, is to be found in a whole range of publications of the time. It was presented for example by the Head of the German Work Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*) Robert Ley (LEY, Robert: *Unser Sozialismus – der Haß der Welt*. Berlin, Verlag der Deutschen Arbeitsfront 1940, p. 3).

21 The expression *Volksgemeinschaft* is usually translated as “national community,” or sometimes “people’s community.” Much more precise is the translation offered by Timothy W. Mason, who uses the expression “*national-racial community*.” John Connelly went a step further, and strictly uses the phrase “*racial community*,” to indicate that the “racial” element had a much more fundamental role than is usually attributed to it. In view of the established usage, I shall continue to use the translation “national community” in this article.

“*Volksgemeinschaft*” as a Social Framework

German social policy, which in the latter half of the 1930s became famous particularly for its success in tackling what had been record unemployment in the time of the Great Depression,²² was a practically essential element of a racially and nationally (ethnically) defined society. *Volksgemeinschaft*, a key term of Nazi political theory embodying a utopian vision of society, was not invented by the Nazis. It had been used by all political parties in the Weimar Republic,²³ but in Nazi theory and practice its meaning changed fundamentally. It lost the sense of inclusive integrating potential for society in general, for which the parties of the right, left and centre had been striving, and came to express the exclusivity of the new regime, with an emphasis on the *excluded*. As the primary object of the campaign to exclude, the Jewish community found itself banished from public social life and branded an alien element (*Gemeinschaftsfremden*). Exclusionary measures were pushed through not only on the basis of widespread anti-Semitism that was structural to the Nazi conception of “the national community,” but also with reference to the criteria of alleged political unreliability and inability to adapt. The integrating dimension of this project was thus proportionately reduced to the group of population permitted to join the new German society. Yet, this did not mean that its integrating potential entirely disappeared. On the contrary, a process of social inclusion and an array of different forms of corresponding pressure formed a key part of the project.

According to the Nazis, the old class society would be replaced by a new social project of *Volksgemeinschaft* with its stress on racial segregation but also egalitarian values as applied to members of a selected group of population. Even just a few years ago, many historians were still having trouble accepting this term as an analytical tool in research on National Socialism.²⁴ They still regarded the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* purely as an ideological-propagandist construct, which never acquired any substance in its time. Not even the most recent scholarship has rejected this

22 The often mentioned success of the Nazis in reducing unemployment in the critical years of the Great Depression has already been challenged and qualified by Timothy Mason (MASON, Timothy W.: *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the “National Community.”* Oxford – New York, Berg 1997). A similarly critical view of the “economic miracle” of Nazi Germany has been expressed e.g. by Albrecht Ritschl (RITSCHL, Albrecht: *Hat das Dritte Reich wirklich eine ordentliche Beschäftigungspolitik betrieben?*. In: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2003), pp. 125–140).

23 See WILDT, Michael: *Die Ungleichheit des Volkes: “Volksgemeinschaft” in der politischen Kommunikation der Weimarer Republik.* In: BAJOHR, Frank – WILDT, Michael (ed.): *Volksgemeinschaft: Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus.* Frankfurt/M., Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag 2009, pp. 24–40.

24 See the discussion between Ian Kershaw and Michael Wildt on the potential and limits of academic use of the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*: KERSHAW, Ian: “Volksgemeinschaft.” In: *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2011), pp. 1–17; WILDT, Michael: “Volksgemeinschaft”: Eine Antwort auf Ian Kershaw. In: *Zeithistorische Forschungen*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2011), pp. 102–109.

claim entirely, but historians have been discovering the interpretative potential and analytical value of the concept. Nazi propaganda of the time exploited the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* in order to cement the unity of the German people, and in this sense it functioned as an important integrating element in itself. It nevertheless involved two contradictory tendencies: on the one hand, it conveyed the idea of a unified community with due emphasis on egalitarian values, but on the other it expressed the highly exclusive character of that community. Real social inequality was concealed under the veil of a “national community,” all of whose members were supposed to be equal. At the same time, nobody hid the fact that this community was not intended for all and that membership of it was not chosen by individuals but decided by the regime and its leading political forces. Nonetheless, membership of the racially defined “national community” did provide ways of improving one’s social and material position in the Nazi regime.

As regards the analytical potential of the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* for historians today,²⁵ three dominant approaches have crystallised in recent years.²⁶ First, the concept can be used to help characterise the changing social and political conditions (*nationalsozialistische Ordnung*) and can be interpreted as a basic term of social practice, although one that is purely analytical and implies no specific social formation. Second, the concept can assist in the description of exclusivity and inclusivity as typical attributes of Nazi society, implying in particular racial discrimination, persecution and extermination. Finally, the concept can be seen as the expression of a certain emotional integration and mobilisation of the power of the regime, containing a promise of a better – partly also a more just – society. Interpretation using the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in this new light offers an interesting epistemological shift of perspective in the historiography of National Socialism, i.e. a turning-away from “grand narratives” and orientation on the cultural history of policy.²⁷

Within the social framework of *Volksgemeinschaft*, which recast social relations in Nazi Germany, the forms and strategies of personal and public struggles for national, racial or in other words pro-regime identity and inclusion were various. The racially and nationally defined community not only exploited the mobilising appeal of the concept for a campaign of integration of selected social groups, but

25 For a good overview of current discussion of the conceptual exploitation of the term *Volksgemeinschaft*, see SCHMIECHEN-ACKERMANN, Detlef: Einführung. In: SCHMIECHEN-ACKERMANN (ed.): *“Volksgemeinschaft”: Mythos der NS-Propaganda, wirkungsmächtige soziale Verheißung oder soziale Realität im “Dritten Reich?”* Paderborn, Schöningh 2012, pp. 13–53.

26 See KERSHAW, I.: “Volksgemeinschaft,” p. 3; NOLZEN, Armin – SÜNKER, Heinz: Nationalsozialismus. In: OTTO, Hans-Uwe – THIERSCH, Hans (ed.): *Handbuch: Soziale Arbeit*. München, Ernst Reinhardt 2011, p. 989.

27 See WILDT, M.: “Volksgemeinschaft,” p. 108. The current trend to use of the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* and exploration of its deeper analytical level is also indicated by the present project of four Lower Saxon universities that have set up a research group called *Nationalsozialistische “Volksgemeinschaft?” Konstruktion, gesellschaftliche Wirkungsmacht und Erinnerung vor Ort* (<http://www.foko-ns.de/>).

made it possible for actors in this community to articulate all kinds of wishes, needs or claims. That the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* genuinely penetrated into the forms of argument and ordinary communication of the population in this way is suggested by a unique example of its invocation and exploitation by the German population of the town of Eisenach in the General Government – an episode that was analysed in detail by the American historian John Connelly in the mid-1990s.²⁸

The analytical value of the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* would seem, then, to lie not simply in the study of its deployment in propaganda, but in exploration of the new social-political practices associated with its diffusion.²⁹ In the words of the German social historian Alf Lüdtke, this is a matter of “the forms through which people ‘appropriate’ ‘their’ world,” by which they accept new social relations as their own and in which they re-learn to act, think and formulate their demands. These newly created conditions are perceived primarily subjectively and the ways in which they are “appropriated” may vary and may change.³⁰ The racial and political persecution, and above all genocidal practices applied to the Jewish and Roma population, went beyond its immediate victims in terms of significance in the transformation of social relations in Nazi Germany. As the historian Michael Wildt approaches it, the study of power, specific practices, their establishment and transformations, focuses attention more on internal society-wide processes than on the direct exercise of power by the Nazi authorities. Society was literally demolished by the political transformation, and “self-empowered” (*Selbstmächtigung*) to take action of its own in the name of the “the national community”: “The exclusion of German Jews from the national community – both the wide ranging exclusion by state regulations and the everyday social exclusion – could not demarcate an anti-Semitic boundary without affecting the non-Jewish part [of the population]. The everyday practice of exclusion changed society itself.”³¹

This redefined academic use of the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* is opening up space for research into the transformation of society, “the new order” (*Neue Ordnung*) that played a part in the ordering of everyday social practice.³² In this form, the concept could (although not always or necessarily) penetrate into the articulation of all kinds of requests and pleas from the side of the population. Where this happened, the concept was most frequently invoked with an eye to securing private benefits; individuals consciously exploited the publicly declared promise that the

28 CONNELLY, John: The Uses of *Volksgemeinschaft*: Letters to the NSDAP Kreisleitung Eisenach, 1939–1940. In: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (1996), pp. 899–930.

29 Michael Wildt has likewise suggested that social practice is the most promising area for the analytical exploitation of this concept (WILDT, M.: “*Volksgemeinschaft*,” p. 106).

30 LÜDTKE, Alf: Einleitung: Was ist und wer treibt Alltagsgeschichte. In: LÜDTKE (ed.): *Alltagsgeschichte: Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen*. Frankfurt/M. – New York, Campus 1989, p. 12.

31 WILDT, Michael: *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstmächtigung: Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939*. Hamburg, Hamburger Edition 2007, pp. 13 and 21.

32 See also the explanatory text by the Reich Minister of Labour: SELDTE, Franz: *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich, 1933–1938*. München – Berlin, Deutsche Verlagsbuchhandlung 1939.

needs of the members of the society (“the national community”) would be satisfied, by demanding the fulfilment of that promise in its name. Argumentation appealing to the *Volksgemeinschaft* project also expressed aspirations for a new order in the socio-cultural hierarchy, because the project not only *de facto* influenced social changes, but set the direction in which these changes were supposedly leading. A “new social policy,” or new strategies of a social policy character directed at the population, was part of a new social practice. They were first implemented on the territory of the old German Reich, but later also in the occupied territories and although they could not in themselves ensure standardised development in all these territories, the newly established social criteria were a move in that direction. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was not therefore spared of social transformations; on the contrary, it was confronted with changes in social conditions, to which the Protectorate’s population were compelled to react.

Nazi Social Policy?

The *Volksgemeinschaft* project served as the social framework of interaction between state and society, and at the same time – in the words of the Head of the Information Office of the Institute for Study of Labour of the German Labour Front (*Arbeitswissenschaftliches Institut der Deutschen Arbeitsfront*) Richard Bargel – gave social policy a new rationale. The Nazi reinterpretation of social policy and its tasks in society was thus most often formulated in contrast to the original Weimar system: “National Socialist social policy does not seek to provide a medicine for the suffering poor, but seeks to ensure that anyone who fulfils his obligations to the national community does not fall into poverty.”³³ Social policy ought not to be a mere safety valve for social tension in society but should help to make sure that such tension did not arise in the first place. The preventive dimension of social policy should not consign it to a secondary position vis-à-vis economic policy; however, on the contrary, social policy should be a distinctive part of economic policy.³⁴ This principle makes all the clearer the emphasis placed by Nazis on social policy and its implementation even at a time when the war was at the forefront of attention: “For our state it is self-evident that even though there is a war on, social policy cannot be suspended, and care for the workers must be maintained.”³⁵

“Workers” played a fundamental role in this process and the word “work” itself became the most important term in social policy. It rapidly made an appearance in legislation, and this indirectly confirmed that the Nazi assumption of power

33 BARGEL, Richard: *Neue deutsche Sozialpolitik: Ein Bericht über Grundgedanken, Aufbau und Leistungen*. Berlin, Verlag der Deutschen Arbeitsfront 1944, p. 8.

34 See GERHARDT, Johannes: *Deutsche Arbeits- und Sozialpolitik*. Berlin, Duncker & Humblot 1939, p. 2.

35 MÜNZ, Ludwig: *Kriegsverpflichtete Sozialpolitik*. In: *Monatshefte für NS-Sozialpolitik*, Vol. 7, No. 21–24 (1940), p. 249.

was regarded as the start of a new epoch of social policy not only in terms of new institutions but also for labour law. One key step was the Law Regulating National Work (*Gesetz zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit*), promulgated in January 1934, which regulated conditions in industrial concerns and introduced the Führer principle into their internal organisation.³⁶

In the new system, social policy was conceived as a form of compensation for work well done, for service to the “national community.” This kind of social policy was supposed to have society-wide potential and, according to Richard Bargel, represented a major innovation: the policy would not focus simply on the poor but would apply to the whole nation (*das gesamte Volk*). Its rationale would be to achieve the best possible living standards in a way that would not just provide the population with benefits but would essentially challenge every member of the community to take his life into his own hands in a responsible spirit.³⁷ The creators of the Nazi conception of social policy wanted to use the policy to overcome rather than simply alleviate social ills and planned to build new social conditions, primarily but not exclusively on the principle of racial “fitness.”

In the Nazi conception, key terms were “work” (*Arbeit*) and “performance” (*Leistung*). These were less excluding concepts than “race,” and ostensibly offered all “workers” a chance to enter into the new social framework and gain a solid standing within it, but of course racial unfitness and inability to work were criteria for social exclusion and aroused a similar antipathy among Nazis. The so-called performance principle – i.e. proportionate and effective efforts to achieve adequate performance, therefore, became an important element of the new social order, which was itself to be realised through work: “When the German finds his place in the national community on the basis of work and performance, this will necessarily also lead to a new ethical valuation of work, which [...] is the greater part of the path on which the German is learning to develop the quality of his personal attributes.”³⁸ Hence in the characterisation of German society, the term *Leistungsgemeinschaft* (performance community) became just as important as *Volksgemeinschaft*, and implied a certain degree of competition between members of the community. The concept of “competition” not only held out a promise of success to efficient workers, but was a constitutive element in the vision of a community in which class and inherited privilege were no longer supposed to play any part.³⁹ While it was the task of the state to offer work, the *duty* (*Pflicht zur Arbeit*) and *right* (*Recht auf Arbeit*) of the individual was to carry it out with all his or her strength in awareness that he or she was thereby contributing to the success of the whole national collective.

36 Gesetz zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit vom 20 Januar 1934. In: *Deutsches Reichsgesetzblatt*, Vol. 1 (1934), p. 122 (see <http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=dra&datum=1934&page=159&size=45>, downloaded 15 January 2013).

37 BARGEL, R.: *Neue deutsche Sozialpolitik*, p. 10.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

39 See GEYER, Martin H.: Soziale Sicherheit und wirtschaftliche Fortschritt: Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Arbeitsideologie und Sozialpolitik im “Dritten Reich.” In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1989), p. 390.

Work performance thus represented an important prerequisite for membership of the “national community.” Anyone who was unwilling or unable to work was not contributing in any form to the growth of national prosperity and so automatically excluded himself/herself from the project of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In practice, this egalitarianism promoted in the propaganda of the period in the context of the “national community” was essentially incompatible with the performance principle. In fact, the rating of individual performance led to reproduction of wage differentials not only between priority branches of industry (such as metal industry) and consumer industry or agriculture, but inside the individual industrial concerns. Striving for the best possible performance in the name of the “national community” in reality meant improving one’s own socio-economic position. In fact, this eroded collective values, but still served the basic aim of the creators of the concept, i.e. improved performance.

While work and its distribution were more or less at the top of the agenda, Nazi social policy also showed an intense concern with some other social issues. Family policy encroached deeply into the private sphere and involved an interest in the upbringing of children from birth to maturity, as well as appealing to women to fulfil their role in society as primarily mothers and wives. In this context, securing the future of the German nation was the highest priority and systematic measures were taken to increase German birth rates. The prioritised areas of social policy in Nazi Germany were work, family and (for associated reasons) health policy.⁴⁰ Elsewhere the regime withdrew into the background, as in the case of housing policy and construction.⁴¹ Any impression of a lack of clarity about the nature and content of social policy under the Nazis is therefore superficial. Social policy in the National Socialist interpretation represented “the set of all measures taken and efforts made by the state and movements to ensure that all the vital forces of the nation should be maintained, secured and strengthened.”⁴² This definition formulated at the time contains all the basic parameters of the social policy implemented in Germany in the years 1933–1945. It indicates that the actor of social policy was not only the state as the main provider of protection (the relevant ministries and lower organs), but also other subjects or organisations affiliated to the Nazi movement were engaged in these tasks (union organisations, national volunteer initiatives and *suchlike*). In particular, the state which had full powers over the distribution of support and care *relied* on other subjects in the field of social policy. The second and probably more important element in Heinrich Schulz’s definition is the term “nation.” It

40 See e.g. MOUTON, Michelle: *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy, 1918–1945*. New York, Cambridge University Press 2007; ECKART, Wolfgang Uwe: *Medizin in der NS-Diktatur: Ideologie, Praxis, Folgen*. Wien – Köln/R. – Weimar, Böhlau 2012.

41 See RECKER, Marie-Luise: Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich. In: POHL, Harms (ed.): *Staatliche, städtische, betriebliche und kirchliche Sozialpolitik vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*. Stuttgart, Steiner 1991, pp. 245–267.

42 SCHULZ, Heinrich: *Sozialpolitik im neuen Deutschland*. Berlin, Deutsche Informations-Stelle 1941, p. 11.

was members of the nation who were supposed to have a claim to social security and the benefits provided by the state and other organisations. It is precisely here that the key question of the main factor determining the character of the system of social support and welfare arises: who can be defined as the object of social policy?

In other words, we need to consider the reference group of recipients of support and welfare provisions, and these were members of the German nation, or more precisely, the “national community”: “As is well-known, like all German political action, German social policy is founded on the national principle. This means that the task of social policy is to create and secure a social order for the nation corresponding to its vital laws and its character.”⁴³ German social policy in the period of National Socialism cannot then be equated with the modern concept of the social state in the sense of general and systematic improvement of social conditions and the prevention or amelioration of the social consequences of ill-health, old age and so on.⁴⁴ It is true that a system of social support and care existed in both Nazi Germany and in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, but the highly differential policy towards different social and ethnic groups and its consequences means that a modern definition is wholly misleading when we are seeking to describe the aims of the Nazi regime.⁴⁵

The rationale of the social policy practiced by the Nazis cannot be grasped if we ignore its image at the time, the way it was perceived and its interpretation by Nazi social policy experts and theorists. These specialists attributed great importance to social policy as an integral autonomous part of state policy, and as a primary component of policy equal in importance to any other major policy area. They saw their efforts as all directed to two basic goals – the preservation and “purification” of the national spirit and the strengthening of the defensive capacity of the state. These goals, to which Nazi ideas of social policy were bound, were considered to require programmes to improve and maximise not only the health of German children and young people, but also the fitness of the nation as a whole, and thorough education in the ethos of “national community.”⁴⁶ It should be reiterated that while the primary aim of Nazi measures on original German territory was improving the living conditions exclusively of members of the “national community,” the situation in the occupied and often ethnically heterogeneous territories was more complicated and less transparent. In any case, however, Nazi social policy was deployed to the full as an ingenious tool of preference and persecution (to use Jakub Rákosník’s formulation in the context of a different period⁴⁷).

43 BARGEL, R.: *Neue deutsche Sozialpolitik*, p. 5.

44 See TOMEŠ, Igor: *Úvod do teorie a metodologie sociální politiky* [Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Social Policy]. Praha, Portál 2010, p. 27.

45 See also BÜHLER, Theodor: *Deutsche Sozialwirtschaft: Ein Überblick über die sozialen Aufgaben der Volkswirtschaft*. Stuttgart, Kohlhammer 1943; IDEM: *Von der Utopie zum Sozialstaat*. Stuttgart, Kohlhammer 1942.

46 See SCHUHMANN, Walter – BRUCKER, Ludwig: *Sozialpolitik im neuen Staat*. Berlin, Willy Rink und Bernard Krause (Verlag für Sozialpolitik) 1934, p. 15.

47 See RÁKOSNÍK, J.: *Sověťské sociálního státu*, pp. 273–306.

Nazi social policy had a dual character, combining ostensible integrating potential with targeted social discrimination and even exclusion. The positive and negative sides of the social policy were deliberately spliced. The historian Ulrich Herbert gives an example of interest-free loans for young couples about to marry: to qualify for the loans, the couples had to undergo medical examination to check whether they were free of a list of inherited or other diseases. Motivated by the prospect of financial benefits in their first married years, some who took the test were successful, but for others a failed test could lead to prohibition of the marriage and even an official “recommendation” that they undergo sterilisation.⁴⁸

The main distinctive characteristic of social policy qualified by the adjective *Nazi*, then, was the racially defined community of persons who were the object of the policy. It thus had two typical and complementary lines. On the one hand, it provided targeted support for racially “valuable” members of the “national community”: the state was concerned to improve their living and working conditions, supported their families and sought to raise their birth-rate to ensure that this part of society grew in numbers. On the other hand, the state took an opposite attitude to the racially “less valuable” part of the population, deliberately neglecting their social claims and even physically eliminating them.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the minimally racially “fit” could perhaps hope at least to reduce the degree of their social exclusion by certain kinds of work or service. The study of practice introduced on the territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, where (as Czech historiography often reminds us) the stage was set for a trial of strength and national loyalty between Czechs and Germans – may suggest how far this possibility was real and how rigid or permeable the border of social segregation was.

Between Czechs and Germans

When Wilhelm Kunitscheck wrote to the Department for Reich Supply (*Abteilung Reichsversorgung*) on behalf of his mother on 22 October 1939, he may or may not have been entirely honest. His mother Anna had already been a widow for some time, and must certainly have been attracted by the prospects of material advantage designed for those who could prove German ethnicity. In her case, however, the necessary documentary proof of this ethnicity failed to arrive despite two letters of reminder. Kunitscheck decided to hurry the process up, or perhaps circumvent it, by sending an apology to the supply office – alleging that the delay was caused simply by the overwork of officials, and promising that as soon he received confirmation of his mother’s status as *Volksdeutsche*⁵⁰ from the Brno Oberlandrat, he would

48 See HERBERT, Ulrich: *Arbeiterschaft im “Dritten Reich”*: Zwischenbilanz und offene Fragen. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1989), p. 334 ff.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 334.

50 Ethnic Germans living outside the territory of the German Reich were known as *Volksdeutschen*.

immediately send it on. The Supply Department did not, however, wait for Wilhelm to write again but directly asked the Oberlandrat for an opinion on the case of Anna Kunitscheck. It received the following report in January 1940: "On this matter, I can notify you that Mrs. Kunitscheck, who obtained her education in a Czech school and speaks only Czech, cannot be considered a *Volksdeutsche*," and could not therefore be granted German state citizenship⁵¹ – and as a result did not qualify for the anticipated level of support. National (ethnic) status, which had hitherto been the free choice of every individual, was now a matter authoritatively determined by the state, which thus created a clear social and national boundary.⁵² Anna Kunitscheck was certainly not the first or last to want to choose freely, and thousands of Czechs applied for Reich German citizenship during the occupation.⁵³ What is crucial is the question of the motives that led her and all the rest to this course of action.

Anna Kunitscheck must have considered herself included in society and been sure that she had promising initial qualifications for improving her position in the social hierarchy. If she had been of Jewish or Roma origin, it would never even have occurred to her to apply. It was through the anti-Semitic and anti-Roma measures that became the characteristic element of the new Protectorate system⁵⁴ that Bohemia and Moravia were progressively incorporated into the Reich German system. No mere formal gesture, the process of incorporation was intended to deeply undermine the political, economic, cultural and social foundations of Czech national consciousness. The anti-Semitic decrees were the first important move in this social transformation. Jews and gipsies found themselves on the very edge of society, as a prelude to complete exclusion. The exclusion did not function purely in public spaces and in the form of promulgation of all kinds of bans, but also in the socio-economic sphere. The aryanisation of Jewish property was accompanied by special regulations on the tax obligations of Jews, Gipsies and Poles, and Jews were not eligible for tax relief of any kind. The so-called social settlement/compensation charge was introduced in 1943, payable by all Jews, Gypsies and Poles

51 *Bundesarchiv*, Berlin (BArch), Fond (f.) Rechnungshof des Deutschen Reiches, call number (sign.) R 2301/4412, Abteilung Reichsversorgung an den Herrn Oberlandrat in Prag, 17 April 1940.

52 See BRYANT, Chad: *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2007.

53 During the Nazi occupation, approximately 300,000 Czechs applied for Reich German citizenship. After the war more than 140,000 "Czechs" with Reich citizenship applied for renewal of Czechoslovak citizenship, and many were successful in their applications (*Ibid.*, p. 227). On this theme, see also FROMMER, Benjamin: *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2005.

54 In the context of the establishment of the Protectorate Constitution, it should be taken into account, however, that a series of anti-Jewish and anti-Roma measures had already been initiated by the Czechoslovak government under the Second Republic, and so the actual process of transformation of the system was a great deal more gradual.

and amounting to fifteen percent of their income.⁵⁵ Insofar as Protectorate social policy measures applied to the Jewish and Gypsy population, then only in the negative sense of having no support function but solely an exclusionary purpose. Given then that social policy towards these groups of population was becoming purely negative, as is evident from Miroslav Kárný's writings, for example, we have to ask why Czech, and by extension Czechoslovak historiography concedes the existence of a social policy system on Protectorate territory at all.

The establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939 could not have meant the total end of the previous system in all respects and the immediate creation of a new system from one day to the next. The political leaders of the Third Reich and the Protectorate were well aware of this and in the context of the division of Czechoslovakia, the question was about the form of the division of the social system that had operated across the territory of the former state. Social questions⁵⁶ were the remit of the third sub-committee in the framework of negotiations on an economic settlement between different parts of former Czechoslovakia. Its primary aim was to ensure a smooth division of the system into two separate wholes that would not be completely disrupted by the change. Continuity was to be preserved so as to keep the existing system functioning until new elements corresponding to the ideas of the Nazi authorities could be incorporated into it.⁵⁷ At this point, too, the regime provided space for various non-governmental initiatives involved in the social field. These included not only purely German organisations such as the National Socialist Union for Charity (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* – NSV) or the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*), but also Czech national foundation projects such as for example Národní pomoc [National Aid], Sociální pomoc [Social Aid], České srdce [Czech Heart] or Péče o horníky

55 See PETRŮV, Helena: *Zákonné bezpráví: Židé v Protektorátu Čechy a Morava* [Legal Injustice: Jews in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia]. Praha, Auditorium 2011, p. 128. Government Decree No. 119 of 3 May 1943, on the Collection of the Social Compensation Tax in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was published in the *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení Protektorátu Čechy a Morava* [Collection of Laws and Decrees of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia] of 1943, pp. 486–488. According to Paragraph 7 of this government decree, the tax offices were responsible for collecting the tax in concern and the money then went to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

56 The following areas were the subject of negotiations: 1) social insurance, 2) provision for war wounded and widows and children, 3) support for the unemployed (especially the distribution of union funds, 4) foundations and funds for social purposes, 5) works pension schemes, 6) state guarantees and loans (mortgages) for social purposes including construction of housing and measures to create jobs, 7) housing (urban population, loans, ordinary contributions), 8) mortgages relating territorially to both the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak state.

57 *BArch*, f. Reichsarbeitsministerium, sign. R 3901/20896, Der Reichsarbeitsminister an die Vorsitzenden der Unterkommissionen, Mitglieder der Unterkommission III (soziale Frage), an den Generalreferenten für das Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Wirtschaftliche Auseinandersetzung zwischen den verschiedenen Teilen der früheren Tschecho-Slowakei, Sitzung am 6 und 7 July 1939, 13 July 1939.

[Care for Miners].⁵⁸ Thus, there existed a relatively elaborate social policy system on Protectorate territory, but who was its client?

Ethnic conditions in the Protectorate offered no scope for simple solutions. Given the anti-Semitic character of the regime, the introduction of a systematic set of measures covering the whole population was out of the question, and so various different social-policy strategies had to be developed. Apart from the roughly 200,000-strong minority of Bohemian Germans (*Volksdeutschen*) and other smaller ethnic minorities, the overwhelming majority of the population was Czech. Czechs were considered “hard-working and intelligent workers,” and Nazi race experts regarded them half as of “Aryan” origin, and even of “higher racial value” than the Sudeten Germans,⁵⁹ but they still belonged to the relatively despised Slav category.⁶⁰ While the Jewish and Roma population suffered unambiguous exclusion, the situation of the Czech population was more complicated in the sense that the status accorded to Czechs in the new system was not so straightforwardly deducible from the regime’s ideology. On the territory of the Old Reich, social relations and hence social policy practices were being remoulded in the spirit of the project of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, but, in the Protectorate, the concept had immediately to be adjusted so that not only Czech Germans, but also Czechs, could participate in it. In the Protectorate, the *Volksdeutschen* were in a minority and regarded by some as no longer a purely “German” community, but even so, their priority inclusion in the new social framework was straightforward and automatic. Czechs by contrast would have to be invited and integrated into the new society. Of course, it is a key question to what extent this happened, what the motives of Czechs who accepted it were, and whether there existed any general consciousness of the advantages offered.⁶¹

58 České srdce [Czech Heart] as the central association for the social-health care of ethnic Czechs outside Bohemian-Moravian territory did not operate on the territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia but in Vienna, where it focused on the welfare of mothers and children, wardship of orphans, care during the holidays, children’s homes, provision of clothes and supplementary assistance, health care and provision of playgrounds and sports grounds. The association was subsidised by the Czechoslovak and later the Protectorate authorities. (*Národní archiv*, Praha (NA), f. Ministerstvo sociální a zdravotní správy [Ministry of Social and Health Care], sign. A 1713, karton (box) 3, Vídeň – České srdce [Vienna – Czech Heart].)

59 See CONNELLY, John: Slaves and Nazis: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice. In: *Central European History*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1999), pp. 14 and 16.

60 The Nazis had a relatively differentiated attitude to the different Slav peoples. In their view, the lowest in status were Russians, Poles, and Ukrainians. The Serbians were considered superior to them and the Czechs somewhat superior to the Serbians. At the top of this ladder were Nazi Croatians, Bulgarians and Slovaks (*Ibid.*, p. 10).

61 In the debate on modernisation and National Socialism, the German Marxist historian Rainer Zitelmann argued that Hitler’s concept of “equality of opportunity” (*Chancengleichheit*) was the distinctive expression of the “modernity” of Nazism. Although the regime did not use this term, Zitelmann saw the demand for improvement of the educational system or targeted support for the children of poor families as expressing the sense of the concept (see FREI, Norbert: Wie modern war der Nationalsozialismus?. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1993), pp. 367–387).

The new declared principles of social policy necessarily corresponded to the parameters of the new society. The new conception of social tasks, and hence also wage policy, reflected the new orientations in the order of human relations: “The social question is ceasing to be merely a question of the working class, and is expanding to include all who work. Social policy is turning away from a purely materialist track to embrace all aspects of life (the beauty of work, the ethics of work, joy stemming from work). A *new conception of work* is being created and the idea of the just rating of performance is coming to the fore.”⁶² The words of the well-known Czech expert in social and economic policy Václav Verunáč indicate just one thing – the implementation of the new criteria of evaluation that had been formulated by German theorists from the mid-1930s. The appearance of the principle of performance-based wages, which had emerged fully in the spirit of the ideal of the “performance community,” testifies to the application of the same measures in German and Czech environments. In the Protectorate, however, the principle had a potentially more fundamental role, suggesting certain porosity in a boundary at first sight sealed: “This socialism regulates conditions in the [Czech] national community according to the principle of performance. People are not the same, they are unequal, but this socialism gives every capable person the same chance of advance and success in work.”⁶³ Although we can be highly sceptical about how far these opportunities were really equal for all, it seems that performance genuinely offered a way of joining the new society. Good work was supposed to be duly rewarded, not only in the form of wages, but with other benefits (e.g. recreation). There was not the smallest doubt of the significance of this compensation: “This new social order is being born in the pains of war, and even if we still cannot precisely say what its forms will be, one thing is certain: it will be the kind of system that puts work first among human duties and rights and also duly appreciates and rewards it.”⁶⁴

The prospect of these advantages must certainly have had some motivating effect and those to whom it was addressed probably welcomed it. In itself it also symbolised acceptance into a new society in which a system of social policy existed but not everyone was allowed to participate in it. Those who contributed to supporting the system by their efforts at work would obtain the chance to profit from it: “The prosperity of any nation is given by the harmony of all their physical and mental powers, all their powers in the factories, in the fields, in workshops and in offices. A time is coming that will respect every kind of work, without discriminating between work of different types and characters. It is natural that this time will above all remember those who are working but whose work has not yet been

62 VERUNÁČ, Václav: Pět let sociálního hospodářství v Čechách a na Moravě [Five Years of Social Economy in Bohemia and Moravia]. In: *Po pěti letech 1939–1944: K pátému výročí Protektorátu Čechy a Morava*, 15. III. 1944 [After Five Years 1939–1944: About the Fifth Anniversary of the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia, 15 March 1944]. Praha, Orbis 1944, p. 159.

63 KUBA, Oldřich: Nový socialismus [New Socialism]. In: *Lidové noviny* (17 October 1940).

64 O nový sociální řád [On the New Social Order]. In: *Hlas* (15 October 1940).

fully appreciated, including in material terms. We need work that is joyful everywhere: this could not happen if the worker does not get the wages he deserves. It is not enough, then, just to express respect for work, of whatever sort. The workers must get everything they need and they deserve.”⁶⁵ Mobilising Czech workers for the benefit of Nazi Germany was not just crucial for the economy of the Third Reich, but at the same time gave Czechs the chance to *choose* their social status in a certain respect.

In order to grasp and credibly describe the social reality in the Protectorate in the context of implementing social policy, we need to consider its different dimensions. The Protectorate was a multi-ethnic territory and the regime’s approach to different groups was necessarily differential given its character. There would be no point in over-generalising the nature of social policy. On the contrary, we need to explore its variable basis and examine social conditions in their full range and all their forms. From this point of view, it is not only the Czechs that present difficulties but the same could be said about the German population, which fell into at least three specific groups in the Protectorate. Bohemian and Moravian (Protectorate) Germans were increasing numbers of Reich Germans, the same as other ethnic Germans who arrived for the purpose of colonising Czech territory. At all events it remains true that however much Germans were prioritised over Czechs, and not only in terms of the distribution of social benefits, both these (the largest) groups of population were recipients of social support and care. The answer to the question of how that was possible can be found if we seek to identify the motives of the regime in their provision.

For this period, saturated as it was by wholly publicly declared violence, it is probably impossible to detach consideration of social policy from understanding of the way it was used as a calculated tool of power. Indeed, the whole topic of social policy could be conceptualised using this approach,⁶⁶ above all if we focus primarily on the ambivalent treatment of different social groups. In this perspective, however, social policy is used purely in its negative aspect of the withholding of social support from certain groups of population, and so as a form of punishment. Social policy is interpreted in terms of the oppression and discrimination to which anyone who engaged in activity in any respect definable as anti-regime, or who were somehow linked to such a person, was exposed. For example, family members of

65 KROUPA, D.: Každá práce jest čestná [Every Kind of Work is Honourable]. In: *Stavba a dřevo*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (June 1944).

66 Such research might theoretically rely on the concept of “biopolitics.” In the context of social policy, this can be understood as an extensive complex of ideas, practices and institutions focused on the care, regulation, disciplining and improvement of the individual and collective “body” of the population. Biopolitics in this sense covers medical practice from individual therapy and the regime of personal hygiene to major public health projects and likewise social programmes both on the level of individual care for particular parts of the population and extensive and quasi-universal programmes of social insurance, etc. (see DICKINSON, Edward Ross: Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy: Some Reflections on Our Discourse about “Modernity.” In: *Central European History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2004), p. 3).

people condemned to death by standing courts would then be denied contributions to food costs (rations).⁶⁷ In broader context, this category might include measures against Jews and Roma, who were targets of “negative” social policy, but since in these cases we are speaking of *a priori* exclusion, and we would have to answer in the negative to the question whether they were regarded as clients of social policy.

The situation was quite different for people who were targeted by social policy in the form of a social offer, i.e. those in whom the regime expressed a degree of positive interest and who therefore gained the chance for a certain choice. These were primarily people who were considered racially “fit” and, at the same time, had some qualification that made them in some way useful to the regime. Via social policy, the Nazi authorities presented such people with an attractive proposition – “we will give you social prosperity if you become one of us.” It was a signal of the regime’s willingness to make a kind of “social contract.” It is in this form that social policy could become a tool for the Germanisation of the Protectorate population of “Aryan” origin. The incorporation of this section of the population into the “national community” was bound up with everyday social policy practice. In the case of workers in the metal industry, it might involve increased wages but also for example offers of recreation in return for increased efforts at work. The same purpose was served by the setting up of showers, changing rooms, toilets and canteens in industrial plants. These provided greater comfort but also helped to get workers back to work on time.

It must be noted, however, that not even social policy in the Nazi conception was necessarily guided under all circumstances by a hidden agenda. It also served for the targeted saturation of the needs of those particular groups of population for whom the regime particularly cared. One example was the systematic and elaborate system of medical care for Reich German children in camps set up as part of the project *Kinderlandverschickung* [Sending Children to the Country],⁶⁸ which was initiated by the occupation authorities out of fear of possible spread of epidemic illnesses. The health of German children, in whom the regime had a pre-eminent interest, was a clear priority. Rather paradoxically, however, this straightforward approach, motivated directly by social need, was sometimes evident in cases of provision of social support to people whose breadwinner (most often the husband) was persecuted, leaving the family in a difficult financial situation. The Central Social Institute of the Prague City Authority evaluated hundreds of personal requests from Protectorate citizens on an individual basis and provided support to many applicants.⁶⁹ Awareness of the possibility of obtaining welfare support, and the

67 NA, f. Policejní ředitelství [Police Directorate] Praha II. – stanice a komisiáry, Malá Strana, oběžník policejního ředitelství v Praze ze 7. 3. 1942 [Internal bulletin of 7 March 1942].

68 See ŠUSTROVÁ, Radka: *Pod ochranou Protektorátu: Kinderlandverschickung v Čechách a na Moravě. Politika, každodennost a paměť, 1940–1945* [Under the Protection of the Protectorate: Kinderlandverschickung in Bohemia and Moravia. Policy, Everyday Life and Memory, 1940–1945]. Praha, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy 2012, pp. 169–175.

69 *Archiv hlavního města Prahy* [Archive of the Capital City of Prague], f. Ústřední sociální ústav Hlavního města Prahy [The Central Social Institution of the Capital City of Prague], box 409.

capacity to formulate an application and accompany it with an affidavit of “racial” fitness was evidently far from rare among Protectorate Czechs. This practice shows not only that the contradictory tendencies towards persecution and provision of aid worked concomitantly in social policy, but also that the authorities acted relatively objectively in some situations. The relevant ministries in the field of social policy⁷⁰ were quite clearly the active implementers of the policies concerned, but social-political discourse was formed under the unambiguous dictate of the occupying power, for example civil servants were supervised by the labour and social affairs group (*Gruppe Arbeit und Sozialangelegenheiten*) at the Office of the Reichsprotektor. Support for the Czech families of persecuted persons could hardly have been given without the knowledge of the Nazi authorities, while of course the systematic advantaging of the German over the Czech population was a clear expression of the initiative of German officials in the state administration. In making sense of all this, future research ought to consider the part played by lower official instances in these and other similar cases.

The third function of social policy may be regarded as a secondary product of economic development and so does not in itself constitute a targeted social measure. It was more an effect of economic changes, such as for example the increase in incomes as a result of the evening up of the wage and price levels between the Protectorate and Reich territory.⁷¹

From the point of view of systematic research on social policy, it is the first three forms of social policy strategy that I have outlined which ought to be further explored. Research would thus reflect the regime’s differentiated but also sometimes ambivalent approach to different national and social groups. Research on social policy during the Second World War is now going even further and seeking to analyse the other side of the relationship between power and society. Historians are posing the question of the way in which the population perceived the ongoing transformation of social conditions and how it reacted to attempts to integrate it into the *Volksgemeinschaft* project.⁷² Miroslav Kárný offered a partial answer to this question at the beginning of the 1990s, when he wrote about the clearly unsuccessful attempts to trick the Czechs and secure their thorough-going Germanisation. He showed primarily that Czech workers believed neither in the sincerity of

70 Up to Heydrich’s administrative reform, this meant primarily the Ministry of Social and Health Administration (MSZS). In 1942, its agenda was allocated to the new Ministry of the Economy and Labour, which also swallowed up the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Public Works, both abolished by the reform. Part of the agenda (public health, general social care and care of the young, housing and social affairs) was taken over by the Ministry of the Interior.

71 See BALCAR, J. – KUČERA, J.: *Von der Rüstammer des Reiches zum Maschinenwerk des Sozialismus* (see note 13).

72 See ROTH, Karl Heinz: Sozialimperialistische Aspekte der Okkupationspolitik: Strategien und Aktivitäten der “Deutschen Arbeitsfront” (DAF). In: RÖHR, Werner – EICHHOLZ, Dietrich – HASS, Gerhart – WIPPERMANN, Wolfgang (ed.): *Faschismus und Rassismus: Kontroversen um Ideologie und Opfer*. Berlin, Akademie 1992, pp. 353–375.

the regime’s social policy measures nor in general improvement. Kárný’s studies document the pessimism and scepticism of the workers, but say little about the actual functioning of the system and its reception.

In future research we need to look, therefore, more closely at how people in the Protectorate came to terms with the new social relations and elements of the system, the extent to which they tried or managed to grasp the chances offered and exploit their possibilities, and the circumstances under which and reasons why they were able and willing to join the new community (*Vergemeinschaftung*).⁷³ In this process, the form of communication between society and the occupation and Protectorate authorities represents a key source for understanding the forms and levels of the population’s *engagement* in the new system.⁷⁴ Perception of the current social-economic situation and political crisis, confidence in own experience of existing inequalities in society and at the same time new hope of remedy for this injustice might constitute preconditions for identification with the new social order.⁷⁵ It would also of course be possible to explore the various different expressions of disagreement, for example in the form of strikes showing the efforts of workers to exact from the system what they had long believed was their due.

Analysing the working and living conditions of the ethnically Czech population does not provide a full picture of Nazi strategies in the social field. The ways in which Czechs and Czech Germans were integrated into the “national communities” often differed and in terms of proclaimed regime policy German experts on social policy stated a systematic preference for the German population over the Czechs. Yet, theory and practice might diverge somewhat, as is evident from the example of the government decree on special allowances for large families of November 1941. According to the first paragraph of this decree, “funds of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia may be used to provide support for large families, on request under

73 Hard to translate, this term means a society to which racial criteria have already been applied. In German milieu, the term is used to clearly distinguish the processes of incorporation of the individual into particular kinds of social whole (society or community) were *Vergesellschaftung* and *Vergemeinschaftung*, concepts that were fully distinguished from each other precisely in the period of National Socialism.

74 For example, the pensioner Josef Růžička of Lhotka wrote to the Reichsprotektor to inform him about what he considered to be a social injustice preventing him from adopting the new system as his own: “The Sir General needs to tell Chancellor Hitler that there are big disparities among lower employees and officials in the local government and state and pensioners. A lower employee and pensioner can have anything between 68 to as much as 1,600 Crowns monthly. Pay needs to be made the same because we all have the same stomachs. Pay rates need to be levelled partly to 10–12 hundred Crowns monthly, and no extra payments for ex-legionaries,” (NA, f. Úřad říšského protektora [The Office of the Reichsprotektor], sign. 114–124-6, box 122, Josef Růžička to Reichsprotektor, undated).

75 “Esteemed Sir Protector, I am writing to you with this request. They make our men retire at 60, when they have not worked enough years and so we are suffering because of the small pensions. So please kindly look into the matter and issue an order for retirement at 62 at least – in your country it is 64 – so two at least by two years above 60,” (IDEM, anonymous letter sent to the Reichsprotektor on 27 April 1939).

conditions further stipulated, a special allowance for the third and every further child younger than 16, to German state subjects and subjects of the Protectorate who have their official residence in the Protectorate or customary residence there and are not Jews,” amounting to a hundred crowns monthly for every child.⁷⁶ The government decree then goes on to set out equal initial conditions for racially “fit” Czechs and Germans applying for this support. At other times, of course, the regime saw no reason for such egalitarianism, and there could be calls for even greater “legitimate” prioritisation of the German population. For example, there were proposals for the introduction of a special nationally selective procedure relating to food rations for pregnant and nursing mothers. These proposals would have enabled German doctors to diagnose German women with all sorts of disorders and illnesses, without real medical basis, in order to give them access to more food rations.⁷⁷ Yet, this suggestion was not accepted officially; it was argued that it had been a long time since maternity had been considered a disease, and a woman could not be granted invalid status for no objective reason. Furthermore, in the spirit of Heydrich’s rationalising administrative reorganisation, officials noted that it would be hard to check on the fulfilment of such a regulation. Publicly declared egalitarianism for the “Aryan” population and a certain levelling practiced in particular areas appeared, to the authorities, to be the ideal route to the adaptation of the Czech population to the new system and the acceptance of that population into a society constructed on the basis of the criteria of “race” and “performance.”

Conclusion

Research into social policy on the territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia opens up a way to study society and its progressive transformation under the influence of systematic measures in the service of the Nazi project of racially-

76 The Government Decree No. 441 of 21 November 1941, on special supplementary payments to large families, was published in the *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení Protektorátu Čechy a Morava* [Collection of Laws and Decrees of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia] in 1941, p. 2041. Government Decree No. 87 of 28 April 1944 extended the decree to cover citizens of the Protectorate who “have their official residence or customary residence on the other territories of the Reich” (*Sbírka zákonů a nařízení Protektorátu Čechy a Morava*, Vol. 1944, p. 465).

77 According to an edict of the Reichsprotektor of 19 September 1940, pregnant and nursing mothers would receive extra rations only in the case of health difficulties. National selection in this context found its most energetic proponent in the head of the group for the health system at the Office of the Reichsprotektor, Fritz Plato, who on his own initiative set himself the task of staying in contact with German doctors and “intervening to the benefit of special German needs,” (NA, f. Úřad říšského protektora – Státní tajemník [The Office of the Reichsprotektor – State Secretary], sign. 109-4/1343, box 82, Gruppe II/2, Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, Vermerk für den Herrn Staatssekretär, Betr. Eierzuteilung an werdende und stillende Mütter, 22 August 1942; letter of F. Plato for Gruppe I/6 addressed to R. Gies 25 August 1942).

based social engineering. The Nazi ideal vision of society, embodied in the social project of *Volksgemeinschaft* (which may be regarded above all as a set of re-ordered social relations), was most visibly characterised by the exclusion of certain groups of the population from participation in the social system, and so the major reduction or complete elimination of their role in society. The value and importance of different social groups was determined by a two-step selection process. First was a decision on racial identity, and then a criterion of merit was applied to those judged “racially fit.” The result was a targeted preference for selected social strata. For this reason, the social policy implemented on Protectorate territory, as in Germany soon after the Nazi takeover, had all the features of a repressive instrument. Its forms then developed under the pressure of other external circumstances, such as the unleashing of war, the intensification of arms production, the first failures of the German army and the start of total war.

The adoption and application of racial measures on the territory of the Protectorate led to changes in the social, economic and cultural sphere in Bohemia and Moravia that were defined in extent and character by the project of the “national community.” The application of the conceptual framework known in period jargon as *Volksgemeinschaft* to the Protectorate environment therefore offers researchers a chance to explore social changes both on the vertical (social-class) and the often neglected (national or ethnic) level. At the same time, it enables them to follow the key process of the deployment of the relevant criteria both in the Reich and in the Protectorate and to link the two territories when studying expert discourse and actual social-policy practice.

As historiography has always made clear, the notion of a strong “national community” played a fundamental role on the Czech as well as the German side in the Protectorate. The invocation of this community and its consolidation by Czech national elites defines the contours of a social project that was similar in its exclusivity to the *Volksgemeinschaft* of the Germans. Of course, the Czech project was bound up with strengthening the unity of the national community at a time of acute political and economic crisis, but it was also moulded by demands for racial purity and political conformity. The patriotically conceived national appeals that it generated have been interpreted by Czech and Czechoslovak historiography as a “protective circle,” shielding the national consciousness threatened by Germanisation, but historians have been much less willing to admit that the occupying power might itself, for its own reasons, have stimulated specifically Czech national sentiment.⁷⁸ The formation of a national environment with a real internal integrating and solidarity-forming dynamic was certainly not an exclusively German project, but nor – on the Czech side – was it exclusively anti-Nazi. In the Protectorate, with the support of the German occupation organs, a Czech, nationally self-defined

78 On this targeted pro-Czech agitation, see ŠUSTROVÁ, Radka: Ve jménu Říše a českého národa: Veřejné manifestace po atentátu na Reinharda Heydricha [In the Name of the Reich and the Czech Nation: Public Manifestations after the Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich]. In: *Paměť a dějiny*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2012), pp. 48–59.

solidarity was formed that was supposed to fulfil an important, even a key function in the economic hinterland of the Third Reich. It was subject to the relevant racial and performance criteria, but was also given the chance to draw on the system of social policy measures. Social policy was thus not only a means of exclusion and the germanising efforts of the occupation regime, but also a tool of integration and social protection, and it penetrated into the everyday lives of the Czech and German inhabitants of the Protectorate in different variants of these apparently contradictory functions. It was clear to the Protectorate and occupation authorities that their goals required a social policy. This is all the more reason why the idea should be accepted by contemporary Czech historiography.

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Unwanted Silesia

Czech “Silesian Identity” in Postwar Czechoslovakia (1945–1969)¹

Jiří Knapík – Zdeněk Jirásek

Expressions of Czech Silesian patriotism – a sense of “Silesian identity” – can be identified and traced throughout the 20th century. The phenomenon was based on strong, historically conditioned “land” patriotism on the ethnically mixed territory of Czech Silesia,² part of historic Silesia (divided between Poland, the Bohemian Lands and Germany). Czech Silesian patriotism displayed different specific features in different phases of its development. It found expression in one way before 1918, in the era of Czech national emancipation, when forming a political leadership in Czech Silesia and promoting solidarity with national Czech politics, and in a different way in the interwar period, when it had to seek compromises between

1 This text was produced in the framework of the research plan MSM4781305905 “Silesia in the history of the Czech State and Central Europe.”

2 See DOKOUPIL, Lumír – MYŠKA, Milan – SVOBODA, Jiří et al.: *Kulturněhistorická encyklopedie Slezska a severovýchodní Moravy* [Cultural–Historical Encyclopaedia of Silesia and North–Eastern Moravia], Vol. 2. Ostrava, Institute for Regional Studies at Ostrava University 2005, p. 362; JANÁK, Dušan: Slezská identita jako politický fenomén po roce 1945 [Silesian Identity as a Political Phenomenon after 1945]. In: KOZERA, Bartłomiej – LIS, Michał (ed.): *Śląsk Opolski i Opawski w Unii Europejskiej: Postsocjalistyczny bagaż i unijne realie/Opolské a Opavské Slezsko v Evropské unii: Postsocialistická zátěž a unijní realie* [Opole and Opava Silesia in the European Union: The Post–Socialist Burden and the Union’s Realias]. Opole, Uniwersytet Opolski – Wydawnictwo Instytutu Śląski 2006, pp. 17–19.

the national ideal and the reality of a multi-ethnic state. After 1945, Czech Silesian patriotism changed fundamentally as a result of the radical social and political transformation of the territory; Silesian sentiment had to absorb the effects of the expulsion of Czechoslovakia's German population, and could now be publicly associated only with centrist and left-wing political programmes (especially the National Socialist Party). The continuing life of certain ideational stereotypes of "Silesian identity" was then overlaid and obscured by the political revolution following the communist takeover of February 1948. Indeed, the uninterrupted and natural crystallisation of the Czech "Silesian ideal" was cut short, and free cultural and political efforts to embody the idea were more or less blocked.

First and foremost, the presented article seeks to identify the ways in which "Silesian-ness" found expression after 1948, and to reconstruct the contours of the very restricted space permitted by the communist regime for its manifestations. Research is complicated by the fact that the subject of "Silesia" and "Silesian-ness" was essentially never discussed as a separate subject in any of the state or party organs for most of the communist era; these organs addressed subsidiary problems connected to the specific position and character of Silesia but without actually speaking of Silesia as such. For this reason, tracing the idea of Silesia includes mapping the deliberate and in-principle passivity of the regime with regard to the subject, i.e. a silence about the question of Silesia when tackling matters closely connected with it. In a very limited way, we can also identify the support of some political groups for ideas that had been among expressions of Silesian patriotism prior to 1948, but were no longer associated with it thereafter.

In this text, we rely on the established periodisation, which we consider generally adequate. The starting point is the fact that after 1945 (1948) Silesia no longer existed as an administrative entity and the complex of social and cultural activities associated with the historic territory became what was essentially a marginal "background noise," in the wake of overall political developments in Czechoslovakia. The pulse rate of the life of the "idea of Silesia," and the potential for realising particular manifestations of that idea, was thus constrained by factors external to the area under scrutiny. In the postwar era, we can essentially distinguish three periods. First were the years 1945–1947 – a period of "limited democracy," during which the idea of Silesia in its Czech form developed and flourished quite vigorously. This was followed by the stage of communist rule from 1948 to 1989. Finally, there is the most recent period starting in November 1989, in which it has been possible to make some aspects of the Silesian idea a partial reality even though that idea has not played anything like the same role in society as it did after the Second World War.³ Two particular episodes stood out sharply in the forty long

3 See GAWRECKI, Dan et al.: *Dějiny České Slezska 1740–2000* [The History of Czech Silesia 1740–2000], Vol. 2. Opava, Ústav historie a muzeologie Filozoficko-přírodovědecké fakulty Slezské univerzity v Opavě 2003, p. 471; JIRÁSEK, Zdeněk: *Slezská idea v poválečném Československu* [The Silesian Idea in Postwar Czechoslovakia]. In: *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea* (Series B), Vol. 40, No. 2 (1991), pp. 185–192, here p. 191.

years of communist rule: first, the years of “building communism” 1948–1953, when the idea of Silesia was pushed very much into the background, and then the years 1968–1969 as the brief period of its partial renaissance. Otherwise the existing literature presents the communist era as undifferentiated with regard to Silesia. Keeping this in mind, our ambition is to offer a rather more structured periodisation in this article.

Czech Silesian Identity after the Second World War

Although we primarily focus on the period after February 1948 in this text, it will be useful to offer at least a partial picture of the situation just after the Second World War. At the same time, we would like to mention that this topic has already attracted a certain amount of scholarly attention, and so we need give no more than an outline of developments.⁴ First and foremost, it should be borne in mind that Czech Silesia was suffering from enormous disruption as compared to the rest of the Czech Lands. The intense fighting in the area towards the end of the war caused huge economic losses. There was major demographic upheaval: the mass transfer of the German population is well known, but another process was also underway in the form of mass arrival of new settlers without any ties to the territory in concern. Many Czechs had been forced to leave in 1938, and only some returned. The empty place left by the Jews of Silesia, murdered by the Nazis, was the greatest reminder of tragedy. There was also a particularly uncertain situation in the Těšínsko/Cieszyn area, disputed between Poland and Czechoslovakia, where the lacerations of recent years had cut deep into the life prospects of many of its inhabitants.

Despite all the devastation and upheaval, the idea of a Silesian identity started to gain momentum almost immediately. Now interpreted in exclusively Czech terms, it was promoted primarily by intellectual circles in Opava, but also by some people linked with Ostrava and its surroundings. Another influence was the Silesian Cultural Institute in Prague (in Czech Slezský kulturní ústav v Praze), which had kept on functioning throughout the occupation and had been preparing the ground for the promotion of “Silesian” demands soon after the liberation of the country.⁵ Unlike in the prewar period, the national (Czech ethnic) element was now clearly dominant in ideas of Silesian identity while the non-ethnic territorial conception was sidelined. Leopold Peřich, the Director of the Silesian Land Archive in Opava (in Czech Zemský archiv v Opavě) and a regional cultural functionary and historian,

4 See *Ibid.*, pp. 186–190; PLAČKOVÁ, Magda – PLAČEK, Vilém: Ke snahám o zřízení Slezské univerzity v Opavě v letech 1946 až 1948 [Attempts to Set Up a Silesian University in Opava in the Years 1946–1948]. In: *Vlastivědné listy Slezska a severní Moravy*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1992), pp. 5–14.

5 See KNAPÍK, Jiří: Zapomenutá národní jednota: Slezský kulturní ústav v Praze 1939–1945 [A Forgotten National Association: The Silesian Cultural Institute in Prague 1939–1945]. In: *Acta historica Universitatis Silesianae Opaviensis*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2008), pp. 253–264.

was perhaps alone in stressing the three-culture heritage of Silesia and rejecting a narrow ethno-national position in favour of a “Silesian standpoint.”⁶ To some extent, this attitude can still be discerned in 1946 in the line taken by the cultural educational functionary Arnošt Mazur. In one of his articles, he wrote: “The time of occupation weighed very heavily on Silesia. Yet, the Silesian preserved his good qualities. [...] There is something in the Silesian nature that arouses respect, something constant, solid. It is an honesty in work and in recreation, in life as a whole, something specifically Silesian.”⁷ Nonetheless, the views of the two Opava cultural workers were pale and unemphatic compared to the perceptions of Silesian nationality that had been widespread from the early 1890s.

All the other manifestations of the Silesian idea in the postwar period were based on the construction of the Silesian region as exclusively Czech. Here we find a whole constellation of different views and studies associated, for example, with the poet Petr Bezruč, the idea of creating a Silesian Slavín (pantheon), or with forms of publicity for the results of the terminology (place-name) committee, and other similar issues.

Several important corporations and institutions of the time were working to conserve and construct a Silesian identity. In the first place, we should mention the revived Opava Cultural Organisation (in Czech Maticе opavská) with its Maticе Days and its motto, “Ostrá hůrka [the Steep Hill] is the symbol – Maticе opavská the guardian of the national unity of the Silesian people.”⁸ There was also the Silesian Cultural Organisation for Popular Education (in Czech Slezská maticе lidové osvěty), which was primarily active in Těšínsko, and the Opava Silesian Study Library. Particularly important was the Silesian Cultural Institute in Prague, which has already been mentioned above, and whose leading figures (most often National Socialist in political orientation) worked in senior positions at various ministries and in central national authorities.⁹ Ideas of a Silesian identity were

6 PEŘICH, Leopold: *Slezsko: Přehled národnostního vývoje* [Silesia: An Outline of Ethnic/Nationality Development]. Praha, Vyšehrad 1945, pp. 9–11.

7 *Z dějin Maticе opavské: K 70. výročí jejího založení* [From the History of the Opava Cultural Organisation: On the 70th Anniversary of its Founding], Supplement to the *Silesian Bulletin*. Opava, Slezský studijní ústav 1947, p. 4.

8 For the most recent account of the organisation, see KNAPÍKOVÁ, Jaromíra: *Maticе opavská: Spolek, osobnosti a národní snahy ve Slezsku 1877–1948* [The Opava Cultural Organisation: The Society, Personalities and National Endeavours in Silesia 1877–1948]. Opava, Maticе Slezská 2007.

9 This organisation, founded in Prague in 1906 by natives of Silesia, was an important bearer of the idea of Czech Silesian identity throughout the first half of the 20th century. The origins and programme of the association are analysed in the article: KNAPÍK, Jiří – KNAPÍKOVÁ, Jaromíra: *Od Slezanu k Národní jednotě slezské v Praze: Formování intervenčního programu spolku v letech 1906–1918* [From The Silesian to the National Silesian Organisation in Prague: The Formation of the Association’s Intervention Programme in the Years 1906–1918]. In: *Slezský sborník*, Vol. 105, No. 4 (2007), pp. 241–274. The history of the association up to the end of the Second World War is the subject of a monograph by the same authors: IDEM: *“Slezský konzulát” v Praze: Od Slezanu ke Slezskému kulturnímu*

also naturally evident in the work of the Silesian Land Museum (in Czech Slezské zemské muzeum), and the name of the Opava theatre company at the time – the Silesian National Theatre (in Czech Slezské národní divadlo) – speaks for itself.

Also worthy of note were one-off projects to promote postwar consciousness of a Silesian identity, and it should be added that such events attracted interest from Czechs even outside the region. They included various exhibitions and lecture programmes, some of them leading to publications of a less ephemeral kind. For example, there was a series of lectures from Opava scholars on Silesian history, cultural and ethnic topics from January to March 1946.¹⁰ The lecturers included Leopold Peřich,¹¹ Bohumil Sobotík and Adolf Turek. There was also a lecture series given by the staff of Masaryk University in Brno, which was later published in book form.¹²

Ideas on Silesian identity acquired specific forms in relation to the question of postwar state frontiers. In the case of Těšínsko, the Czech side was unwilling to discuss the matter with the Poles on any level, and insisted that the border existing before 1 October 1938 had to be restored. There were many initiatives supporting the annexation of various territories of currently Polish Silesia – Ratibořsko, Hlubčicko and Kozelsko¹³ – and extending the border mountain belt to include the German, respectively Polish foot of the mountains and the region of Kladsko. The relevant central bodies were rather lukewarm on these matters but people at the lower levels of government and interest organisations often argued that the Germanised Silesian territories needed to be re-Czechised.

The final level of concern with Czech Silesian identity after 1945 was expressed in attempts to secure a clearly defined regional-administrative position in the framework of the Czechoslovak Republic for Silesia. Czech Silesia was not ultimately to be recognised in any way in its historic borders as an official governmental or administrative entity, but the campaign seemed to many of its exponents realistic and with good prospects of success at the time: an Ostrava Branch Office of the Land National Committee in Brno was established, and many saw this as a provisional arrangement paving the way for the creation of a Silesian Land authority with full territorial competence. As things turned out, these hopes were illusory.

ústavu 1906–1945 [The “Silesian Consulate” in Prague: From the Silesian to the Silesian Cultural Organisation 1906–1945]. Opava, Ústav historických věd Filozoficko-přírodovědecké fakulty Slezské univerzity v Opavě 2010.

10 See VALUŠEK, Bohuslav: *Vlastivědné přednášky o Slezsku* [Ethnographic Lectures on Silesia]. In: *Slezský sborník*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (1945), p. 195 ff.

11 Most recently on this figure, see ŠOPÁK, Pavel – MÜLLER Karel (ed.): PEŘICH, Leopold: *Texty* [Texts]. Opava, Slezská univerzita v Opavě 2007.

12 *Slezsko, český stát a česká kultura: Cyklus přednášek pořádaných Masarykovou univerzitou v Brně* [Silesia, the Czech State and Czech Culture: A Series of Lectures Organised by Masaryk University in Brno]. Opava, Matice opavská 1946.

13 See JANÁK, Dušan: *Neklidná hranice: Slezské pohraničí v letech 1945–1947* [The Unquiet Borderlands: The Silesian Borderlands in the Years 1945–1947], in *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea* (Series B), Vol. 42, No. 1 and 2 (1993), pp. 63–75 and 147–168.

Czech Silesian Identity and the Beginnings of the Communist Regime

The communist regime that came to power in 1948 sought to create an entirely new society with a value system derived from Marxist–Leninist ideology. Despite external adoption of some national–ethnic traditions, the new order was supposed to have completely different foundations. Such ideologically driven tendencies to discontinuity were most intense in the regime’s “founding” period, which lasted roughly to the mid–1950s. In line with the centralised direction of the state, Czechoslovak society was to cohere on the basis of the “unifying” ideals of “social progress,” “class interests,” efforts to “build socialism,” and “socialist patriotism.” Conversely, all the particularist interests (often imagined) expressed by all the various groups of citizens in clubs and societies were to be eliminated.¹⁴ After February 1948, then, there could be no prospect of cultivating a “Silesian identity” or Silesian traditions in the longer term, even though the idea enjoyed some support in the pro–communist intelligentsia, even in the highest places, for up to roughly the middle of 1949, the “Silesian cause” had a prominent supporter at the very centre of communist power – Minister Zdeněk Nejedlý. As late as in the spring of 1948, on the occasion of the founding of the Silesian Study Institute in Opava, Nejedlý was still promoting the theory that Silesia was our weakest place (he meant primarily in regard to Germany) and for that reason deserved special and distinctive attention. Soon, however, he abandoned these views or at least ceased to express them publicly; they were at odds with the ideological dogmas that were the new order of the day.

As far as the communist regime was concerned, Silesia was a problematic, sensitive region, and interest in its specific heritage threatened to divert attention from “socialist industrialisation.” The regime therefore tried to downplay and reduce its specific character, and took a separate, atomising approach to the Polish ethnic minority (policy to the latter was affected in the years 1950 and 1951 by the so-called Ciešlar Platform affair),¹⁵ the problem of Hlučínsko and the newly settled

14 Milan Myška talked with Lumír Dokoupil about the “rationally incomprehensible efforts of the communist regime to suppress reminiscences of Silesia and a sense of belonging to it in the minds of citizens” (DOKOUPIL, Lumír – MYŠKA, Milan – SVOBODA, Jiří et al.: *Kulturněhistorická encyklopedie Slezska a severovýchodní Moravy* [The Cultural and Historical Encyclopedia of Silesia and North East Moravia], Vol. 1. Ostrava, Ústav pro regionální studia Ostravské univerzity 2005, p. 61).

15 The Ciešlar Platform was the term given to the set of proposals drawn up in 1950 by the Chairman of the District Committee of the KSČ [the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia] in Český Těšín. Paweł Ciešlar wanted to tackle the national/ethnic problems in Těšínsko by strengthening the national rights of the Polish population. The KSČ leadership reacted by branding these proposals (in the words of the party ideologist Gustav Bareš) an expression of “bourgeois nationalism,” and Ciešlar was then politically ostracised (see GAW-RECKI, D. et al.: *Dějiny Českého Slezska 1740–2000* [History of Czech Silesia 1740–2000], Vol. 2, p. 497; see also PLAČKOVÁ, Magda: Pavel Ciešlar a jeho platforma: K polské otázce na Těšínsku na počátku 50. let [Pavel Ciešlar and his Platform: On the Polish Question in Těšínsko at the Beginning of the 1950s]. In: *Vlastivědné listy Slezska a severní Moravy*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1995), pp. 5–8; IDEM: Zneužití tzv. ciešlarovštiny na cestě k “začleňování”

border areas. Concerns about national–ethnic tensions were a determining factor for refraining from foregrounding any “Silesian” issues in public, and any consciousness of Silesian patriotism was a way for the regime to avoid stirring up the national–ethnic question in the Ostravsko (later North Moravian) region. From the regime’s point of view, a predominantly negative attitude to awareness of “Silesian identity” (regarded in the idiom of the time as a form of bourgeois nationalism) was a stabilising policy, as in the case of the Czech–Slovak relationship, if naturally on a much smaller scale. At the end of the 1950s/beginning of the 1960s, another increasingly important perceived factor in connection with Silesia was the problem of so-called “revanchism.”¹⁶

It is in this context that we can see the emergence of a new, dichotomous presentation of Silesia. The patriotism once identified with the region was denounced as unhealthy “Old Silesian–ness,” which was associated with the era of “class oppression,” Germanisation, and Czech–Polish ethnic disputes. The new era was, by contrast, associated with the idea of “socialist Ostravsko,” an entity that dissolved the Silesian region from the administrative point of view. The regional boundaries of 1949 and 1960 in no way respected historic Silesian boundaries and if there had to be some reference in the context of the administrative regions to their Silesian parts, the usual practice was to talk of the “Silesian areas” and their characteristics,¹⁷ or about “broader Ostravsko,” or even “former Silesia.”¹⁸

With a certain hyperbole, we can say that the communist regime was willing to partially accept an “antiquarian Silesian identity.” The space for its realisation was defined by museum exhibitions (above all in Opava, Jeseník, Bruntál, Český Těšín and Frýdek–Místek), ethnographical and historical studies, the older generation of Silesian artists,¹⁹ retrospectively orientated literary works, Silesian folklore and a few institutions or local names with the attribute “slezský” [“Silesian”]. This

polských spolků do komunistického systému na počátku 50. let [The Abuse of the So-Called Cieslaresse on the Path to “Incorporation” of the Polish Associations into the Communist System at the Beginning of the 1950s]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1996), pp. 10–12; KNAPÍK, Jiří: *Kdo spoutal naši kulturu: Portrét stalinisty Gustava Bareše* [Who Fettered Our Culture: Portrait of the Stalinist Gustav Bareš]. Přerov, Šárka 2000, pp. 133–135).

16 See MARIÁNEK, Vladimír: Do nové práce [To New Work]. In: *Radostná země*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1959), p. 4; *Zemský archiv Opava* [hereafter *ZA Opava*], Fund (f.) Krajský výbor [Regional Committee (KV)], KSČ Ostrava – Bureau Meeting, box 213, inventory number (inv. no.) 63, Minutes from Meeting, 12 May 1964; P–824, the Development of Ideological Diversion and Its Manifestations in the North Moravian Region.

17 See for example SVOBODA, Jaroslav: K šedesátinám Heleny Salichové [For the Sixtieth Birthday of Helena Salichová]. In: *Radostná země*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1955), p. 54.

18 *ZA Opava*, f. KV KSČ Ostrava – Bureau Meeting, box 174, inv. no. 59, Minutes from Meeting, 8 April 1958; P–634. Here, the Silesian Museum in Opava is characterised as a regional museum “with the collection area of the former Silesia.”

19 At the end of the 1960s, the writer Helena Salichová was still speaking of her “Silesian homeland” (SALICHOVÁ, Helena: Akce “Budujeme Slezsko” v letech 1945–1949 [The “Let Us Build Silesia” Campaign in the Years 1945–1949]. In: *Nové Opavsko*, Vol. 6, No. 11 (1964), pp. 13–16).

restrictive ideological frame was tighter because post-February Ostravsko was so manifestly a source of strong political support for the regime.²⁰ In this situation, the concept of Silesia, stripped of any political, economic or administrative dimension, was reduced to a cultural matter, condoned by the model of “old Silesia” versus “new Ostravsko.” One vivid example of this device, already thoroughly enforced and policed by state and party organs (everything that might deviate from it was nipped in the bud), is a statement by Josef Závěta, a Czechoslovak People’s Party deputy in the National Assembly. In March 1959, in a debate on a law on the position of the works committees of the basic organisations of the Revolutionary Trade Unions Movement, he declared, “[...] a quarter of a century ago, Ostravsko was very different from today [...] today’s way of life and advantages were still undreamt of by the workers of Ostravsko. It is enough just to look through the pages of Silesian Songs by Petr Bezruč.”²¹

The relationship of the communist regime to Petr Bezruč, and his famous *Slezské písně* [Silesian Songs], presented quite a delicate problem in this context. The work of this poet, honoured with the title of “National Artist” in 1945, symbolically represented the idea of Silesia in its divided and heterogeneous ethno-national profile. This is why some people in the communist leadership argued on ideological grounds that publishing houses should be permitted to bring out only a selection of the *Slezské písně* at the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s. After the General Secretary of the KSČ Rudolf Slánský was tried and the subsequent changes in cultural policy took place in 1952, these tendencies were suppressed as typical manifestations of “cosmopolitanism” and Bezruč’s work was published in full in massive print runs.²² The communist regime stressed its social and “class” aspects, and within a few years, the official sanctification of the poet, who became very much a prisoner of the “cult of Bezruč,” led to a kind of rinsing out of the specifically “Silesian” character of his literary image. The process was particularly obvious by the mid-1960s during preparations for nation-wide celebrations of the centenary of the poet’s birth; the state organs emphasised that their purpose was to “highlight the contemporary meaning” of the first publication of his work at the beginning of the 20th century and so accentuate the importance of politically engaged art in general and its “inevitable contribution to the progressive

20 See JIRÁSEK, Zdeněk: K průběhu roku 1956 v Ostravském kraji [On the Course of the Year 1956 in the Ostrava Region]. In: *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea* (Series B), Vol. 46, No. 1 (1997), p. 91.

21 Joint Czecho-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library, National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic 1954–1960, steno-protocols, 31st meeting on 26 March 1959, available at www.psp.cz/eknih/1954ns/stenprot/031schuz/s031005.htm.

22 For more detail, see KNAPÍK, Jiří: *Vzajetí moci: Kulturní politika, její systém a aktéři 1948–1956* [In the Captivity of Power: Cultural Politics, its System and Actors 1948–1956]. Praha, Libri 2006, pp. 187–194. The anti-Semitic and anti-Polish character of some of the poems, and evidently also the fact that these themes were abused by Nazi propaganda during WWII, had some weight in arguments for a selective approach to Bezruč’s work. By 1952, however, in the context of the trial of Rudolf Slánský, the anti-Semitic sentiments were welcomed.

social–political revolutionary striving of the people.”²³ It is not surprising that on the basis of this interpretation, the Bezruč centenary was hailed as an important background for the main anniversary of 1967 – the fiftieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

From the outset, the attitude of the communist regime to Silesian patriotism was largely conditioned by the manifestations of Silesian-ness in the years 1945–1947, which have already been adequately described in academic literature. The regime’s immediate concern in the area after the takeover was to try to neutralise political opponents, especially the structures of the National Socialist Party in the parts of the territory under the Ostrava Branch of the Land National Committee in Brno that had a Silesian identification. The communist organs had already attacked these structures for what they called “Silesian separatism.”²⁴ The Opava Cultural Organisation,²⁵ the Silesian Cultural Organisation for Popular Education, and the Silesian National Council were then dissolved in the first wave of liquidation of societies and organisations affecting the whole of Czech society. The measures were justified in general terms by the need to unify public life and prevent the doubling of cultural, educational or ethnographic activities.²⁶ As part of the standardisation of official names in July 1949, the theatre network known as the Silesian National Theatre in Opava was renamed the Zdeněk Nejedlý Municipal Regional Theatre in Opava (in 1957, it was renamed the Zdeněk Nejedlý Silesian Theatre and so it remained right up to February 1990).

The Silesian Museum, the Silesian Study Institute and (for the first few years of communist rule) the Silesian Cultural Institute in Prague were left as the only institutions visibly representing the idea of Czech Silesia, albeit on a very limited scale. Admittedly, the establishment of the Opava Silesian Study Institute was regarded by the leadership of the Ostrava Branch of the Land National Committee as a significant and quite a prestigious affair, for the institute under scrutiny, brought under state management in 1949, became the only regionally profiled centre with a comprehensive research programme in the fields of social and natural sciences for a whole decade. Nonetheless, the targetting of the research programme on Silesia, as presented in the autumn of 1948 in the study series “The Current State and Tasks of Scientific Research on Silesia,” had to be visibly revised in the field

23 *Státní okresní archiv Opava* [Opava State District Archives] (hereafter *SOka Opava*), f. ONV Opava 1960–1976, box 1691, inv. no. 1457, Report of the Ostrava KNV – Regional National Committee on Preparations for the Centenary of the Birth of P. Bezruč.

24 See MARTINEK, Branislav: Okresní výbor KSČ v Opavě v letech 1945–1948 [The District Committee of the KSČ in Opava 1945–1948]. In: *Vlastivědné listy Slezska a severní Moravy*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2007), p. 28.

25 See KNAPÍKOVÁ, Jaromíra: *Matice opavská*, pp. 181–185.

26 Marginal in importance, the Opava Sdružení umělců slezských [Association of Silesian Artists] was finally dissolved in January 1953, after which its members transferred to the relevant branches of the Artists’ Unions (for more detail, see: SKOČÍKOVÁ, Vendula: *Sdružení umělců slezských* [The Association of Silesian Artists]. Opava, Manuscript 2005, available in the Central Library of the Philosophical and Natural Scientific Faculty of the Silesian University in Opava. I am relying on factual information from this otherwise not very cogent work).

of history at the beginning of 1950, when the Ministry of Education, Sciences and Arts instructed the Institute to give priority to modern history with a preference for research into economic history and the history of the workers' movement in Silesia and in Ostravsko. This was the beginning of a process of progressive redefinition of the Institute's research profile that culminated in the mid-1950s.²⁷ The timing of this restrictive step in 1950 was not accidental from the point of view of the needs of the communist regime. It was at this point that the regime was completing the process of creating basic mechanisms and tools for control of society and was starting a propaganda offensive to push through the new ideological stereotypes.²⁸

In relation to the dismantling of the Silesian idea, we should also mention that it was in 1950 when the Silesian Study Institute shelved its prestigious project "Silesian ethnography" (Ethnography of the Silesian Districts), and the same year marked the beginning of the end for the Silesian Institute in Prague. The latter's few remaining years were marked by lingering decline,²⁹ and a vain struggle with the authorities to be allowed to become an association affiliated with the Opava Silesian Study Institute. After the winding up of the Silesian Institute in January 1957, however, a regional ethnographic circle was formed with the name *Bezručův kraj* [Bezruč's Country], and this quite faithfully copied the former institute in membership and functionary base (Ladislav Vašek, Otakar Dymer, Zdeněk Jerman, Nina Bonhardová, Ferdiš Duša, Jan Šafář, Jaroslav Volenec, Oldřich Zíka, Jarmila Glazarová, A. C. Nor, Zdeněk Vavřík, Vilém Závada and others) reinforced with university students from the abolished *Domov slezských studentů* [Hostel for Silesian Students].³⁰ The new ethnographic circle nonetheless had to abandon the idea of calling itself "The Silesian Circle" or "The Silesian" on the grounds that the Constitution of 9 May did not recognise the historic territories of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. In this situation,

27 For more detail, see KNAPÍK, Jiří: *Slezský studijní ústav v Opavě 1945–1958: Proměny vědeckého pracoviště v regionu* [The Silesian Study Institute in Opava 1945–1958: The Transformations of a Scientific Centre in the Region]. Praha, Výzkumné centrum pro dějiny vědy 2004, pp. 94–100.

28 For more on this topic, see KNAPÍK, Jiří: *Únor a kultura: Sovětizace české kultury 1948–1950* [February and Culture: The Sovietisation of Czech Culture 1948–1950]. Praha, Libri 2004, pp. 271 and 331.

29 On this subject, see IDEM: *Slezský ústav v Praze a vědecký výzkum Slezska v letech 1945–1950* [The Silesian Institute in Prague and Scientific Research on Silesia in the Years 1945–1950]. In: *Práce z dějin vědy*, Vol. 6: *Semináře a studie Výzkumného centra pro dějiny vědy z let 2002–2003*. Praha, Výzkumné centrum pro dějiny vědy 2003, pp. 475–550. The fate of the leading functionaries of the Silesian Institute is interesting; while some of them had to withdraw from publicly visible activities (Ladislav Vašek, Otakar Dymer), others continued to be active in national governmental bodies. For example, Josef Budník, for many years a functionary of the Silesian Institute, continued to work in the Ministry of Justice in the mid-1950s. (*Národní archiv* [The National Archive of the Czech Republic] (hereafter *NA*), f. Ministerstvo kultury [Ministry of Culture], box. 166, inv. no. 225, Minutes of Meeting on Copyright/Authorial Law, 2 September 1954).

30 *Archiv hlavního města Prahy* [The Archive of the City of Prague], f. Spolkový katastr [Associations Register], sign. IX/159; ŽIŽKA, Josef: *O čem psali kronikáři před 10 lety* [What the Chroniclers Were Writing about 10 Years Ago]. In: *Zpravodaj Rady Města Frýdku–Místku*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2006), p. 11.

Petr Bezruč agreed to lend his name to the circle in concern. Continuity of personnel meant that it, to some extent, preserved the Silesian idea of the original society at least up to the 1970s. From its founding in 1958 to the end of the 1980s, the Prague Bezručův kraj maintained contacts with cultural functionaries in Silesia (for example through a branch set up in Frýdek–Místek in 1978 and still existing to this day). Under the leadership of its president of many years, the composer and Charles University professor Jaroslav Slavický, the Prague Bezručův kraj organised the festival Lach Cultural Spring and other events.³¹

In line with the acceptance of “antiquarian Silesian–ness,” a permanent exhibition could be ceremonially opened in the Exhibition Building of the Silesian Museum in Opava in the Spring of 1955 (7 May), as part of celebrations for the tenth 10th anniversary of the country’s liberation. It showed “the development of nature and society in the historic region of Silesia,” and was soon attracting praise from district and regional organs as one of the best exhibitions in Czechoslovakia, and recommendations from cultural educational organisations as “an aid to the formation of a scientific world view.”³² The revival of the activity of the Silesian Museum paradoxically reminded the state organs of the earlier idea of merging the Silesian Study Institute with the Museum, but the plan was dropped in the face of resistance from the Institute’s leadership. It should be added that the Silesian Museum ceased to come directly under the Ministry of Culture and became a regional museum in 1956.

The Stigma of Local Patriotism

In the mid–1950s, the communist leadership in Czechoslovakia started to modify its methods of running the state and revived some previously banished aspects of the life of society in a process that might be regarded as one of gradual but by no means consistent liberalisation. It cannot be said, however, that pro–Silesian sentiment found greater sympathy in party or state organs in the region or at the national level even in this more relaxed climate. On the contrary, after 1956, in reaction to events in Poland and Hungary, the theme was considered even more sensitive, and any signs of its revival were rejected as an expression of so–called revisionism, or later in some cases of liberalism. The caution of the political organs makes it difficult to discern any small shifts, and instead there is evidence of a certain increase

31 The activity of the Bezručův kraj in Frýdek–Místek (Chlebovice) and its close links with people in Prague is documented for example by the organisation’s chronicle.

32 ZA Opava, f. Krajský národní výbor (KNV) Ostrava – Board Meeting, Box. II/21, Agenda Number 4999, Records from the 111th Meeting of the Board of the KNV, 5 March 1957; SOkA Opava, f. ONV Opava 1954–1960, box 12, inv. no. 86, Report on the State and Need for Cultural and Educational Work in the Opava District, 27 May 1958; H. P. [PODEŠVOVÁ, Hana]: Slezské museum otevřeno [The Silesian Museum Opened]. In: *Radostná země*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1955), pp. 60–62.

in pressure, specifically at the end of the 1950s and in the mid-1960s, when there were bursts of concern about the problem of “local patriotism.”

As part of the socio-political relaxation that took place in the mid-1950s, the communist regime permitted the publication of new cultural periodicals with a generational or regional profile. These included the magazine *Květen* [May], the Brno *Host do domu* [Guest to the House] and the launch of the cultural-political magazine *Červený květ* [Red Flower] in the Ostrava region in May 1956, its name an allusion to the poetry of Bezruč. It should be added that the Ostrava magazine was provided with less encouragement and worse conditions than the first two periodicals. It was obviously no accident that it was on the pages of *Červený květ* that discussions on the issue of “regionalism” were started, prompted by the very founding of the magazine and specifically in the form of a running symposium on the value of regionalism in literature, with regionalism regarded positively as contrasted with undesirable provincialism and “local patriotism.”³³ The symposium was in fact a continuation of the directed discussion on the pages of the regional daily paper *Nová svoboda* [New Freedom] in 1955. All this may have been another way of impressing on readers the sensitivity of Ostravsko and the Silesian region. The regional party and state organs regularly monitored *Červený květ* and assessed its “ideological profile,” and regarded the symposium on regionalism important.³⁴ Similar discussions also appeared in ethnographic periodicals with a narrower district profile. The end of 1959 saw the launch of the journal *Opavsko*, for example, which was soon publishing debates (up to 1961) on the concept of regionalism in ethnography, and specifically on the “maladies of historical ethnography up to now, especially in relation to Silesia and above all Opava itself.”³⁵ Part of the debate targeted at the evils of “Opavan egocentrism” as a specific manifestation of local patriotism in the history of Opava and the Opava region as a whole, which allegedly involved “false reminiscences” of the former position of the land capital and antipathy to Ostrava and the Ostrava region as such.

33 PAVERA, Libor: *Časopis Červený květ (v letech 1956–1958)* [The Magazine Red Flower (in the Years 1956–1958)]. In: SVOZIL, Bohumil (ed.): *Časopis Květen a jeho doba: Sborník materiálů z literárněvědní konference 36. Bezručovy Opavy (15. a 16. září 1993)* [The Magazine May and Its Epoch: Proceedings from the Literary Conference Bezruč's Opava (15 and 16 September 1993)]. Praha – Opava, Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR – Slezská univerzita v Opavě 1994, pp. 73–76.

34 ZA *Opava*, f. KV KSC Ostrava – Meeting of the Bureau, box 170, inv. no. 58, Records of Meeting, 14 January 1957, P-589; *Ibid.*, f. KNV Ostrava – Meeting of the Board, Box. II/20, Agenda No. 4890, Record of the 109th Meeting of the Board of the KNV, 5 February 1957.

35 ORLÍK, Josef: Romantismus a lokální patriotismus [Romanticism and Local Patriotism]. In: *Opavsko*, No. 2 (March 1960), p. 18.; also see URBANEC, Jiří: Až kam sahá lokální patriotismus? [Just How Far Does Local Patriotism Reach?]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 4 (November 1960), p. 24; ORLÍK, J.: K diskusnímu příspěvku J. Urbance [On the Discussion Contribution by J. Urbanec]. In: *Ibid.*, p. 24; MARIÁNEK, Vladimír: O náplni a nových úkolech regionální vlastivědné práce [On the Content of the New Tasks of Regional Ethnographic Work]. In: *Ibid.*, No. 5 (May 1961), p. 18.

Even the continuing existence of a Higher Pedagogical School (a teacher training college) in Opava could, at this time, be considered a relic of “Opavan egocentrism” although the basic problem with the school was that its location was at odds with the planned reorganisation of the higher education network in Czechoslovakia. In the spring of 1958, the Board of the Opava District National Committee reacted to the situation by supporting the idea of upgrading the school to the status of a Pedagogical High School (university), and of establishing another university geared to technical subjects. In a time of suppressing expressions of “local patriotism,” however, these suggestions had no chance of success. In any case, the initiative itself was neither particularly nor systematically formulated and was more just a reaction to reports of plans to transfer the Higher Pedagogical School from Opava to Ostrava, which indeed happened a year later.³⁶ We should remember that it was in the autumn of 1959 when the Association of Silesian Artists, reincarnated just a few years before, in 1954, was forced to terminate its activities.³⁷

To make matters worse, towards the end of the 1950s, the campaign against local patriotism became an element of the “ideological preparation” for a new administrative reorganisation of the state. At the end of April 1959, the Central Committee of the KSČ adopted a resolution “on the mission and tasks of the local press,” which on the one hand criticised the uneven standard of works magazines and district (village) news in promoting awareness of political production and cultural tasks, and on the other warned against the penetration of local patriotism onto their pages.³⁸ In September of the same year, the problem of local patriotism, now in connection with the announced administrative reorganisation, was addressed at a meeting of the Central Committee of the KSČ by the First Secretary Antonín Novotný; he saw it as a petit-bourgeois relic manifested in excessive emphasis on the economic or political importance of a particular place and appeal to its cultural tradition. The communist press followed his cue and declared that “the glory and honour of a town does not depend on whether or not it is the administrative centre of a district or region.”³⁹

If the political situation in the 1950s narrowed the space for the expression of Silesian patriotism to a minimum, then the establishment of the territorially much more extensive North Moravian Region only confirmed the trend. A new wave of centralisation put even greater emphasis on Ostrava and Ostravsko in the newly defined administrative region, and this was supposed to be reflected in the cultural

36 *SOkA Opava*, f. ONV Opava 1954–1960, Box. 24, Records of 43rd Meeting of the Board of the ONV, 16 May 1958.

37 SKOČÍKOVÁ, V.: *Sdružení umělců slezských* [Silesian Artists' Association]. In: *Nové Opavsko*, Vol. 10, No. 14 (6 April 1968), p. 3.

38 O poslání a úkolech místního tisku [The Mission and Tasks of the Local Press]. In: *Usnesení a dokumenty ÚV KSČ od XI. sjezdu do celostátní konference KSČ 1960* [Resolutions and Documents of the Central Committee of the KSČ from the 11th Party Conference of 1960]. Praha, Státní nakladatelství politické literatury 1960, pp. 336–351.

39 O lokálním patriotismu [About Local Patriotism]. In: *Život strany*, Vol. 6, No. 24 (1959), pp. 1508–1510.

facilities of the regional capital. When the regional party leadership were approving proposals for the media popularisation of the North Moravian Region in mid-1962, it was symptomatic that the great majority of these proposals spoke of Ostravsko; support went to a series of proposals that both strengthened the position of Ostrava as a dominant cultural centre and were likely to attract attention from the country as a whole.⁴⁰ The extension of the powers of regional national committees in the management of culture and popular education also played to this tendency; a government resolution in March 1963 criticised district national committees for poor management of cultural life since 1960, mistakes in the activities of their school and cultural committees, the promotion of “local interests” in a range of cultural facilities, and suchlike.⁴¹

One case that illustrates the issues was that of the Regional People’s Education Centre based in the Chateau of Hradec near Opava. The time when it was set up had been characterised by a certain tuning down of propagandist and political public education activities and it had organised a series of ethnographic and cultural programmes. Following the reorganisation of the administration in 1960, the centre came under the regional instead of the district national committee; and it was renamed “The Silesian Cultural Centre – Chateau of Hradec” in October 1960. The new emphasis on its “Silesian” profile was perceived as a purely practical matter, justified by geography and considerations of prestige. The author of the change, the writer and “popular educator” Fran Směja, who was soon to retire as director of the centre, explained it in the following terms: “The name *Silesian* more credibly identifies the scope of its activities, is a better definition of the geographical locality, and also has promotional value.”⁴² On the other hand, it is questionable how far the parent authority, i.e. the Area National Committee in Opava, appreciated this change of name; according to surviving reports on the activity of the centre, it seems to have been more concerned about lack of proper publicisation of problems of agricultural production than about cultural programmes.⁴³ Furthermore, the centre lost its “Silesian” title once again in 1964, and this was probably in the context of criticism of the promotion of “local interests” in cultural facilities.

40 ZA Opava, f. KV KSČ Ostrava – Meeting of the Bureau, box 202, inv. no. 61, Record of Meeting, 22 June 1962; P-775. Topics of discussion included the organisation of a Nationwide Festival of Advertising and Promotional Film, the setting up of the Short Film Studio and theatre of small forms in Ostrava, and the need for more coverage of Ostrava artistic ensembles in Prague and Ostrava television broadcasting.

41 See BUKOVSKÝ, Miroslav: Důležité změny v řízení osvěty národními výbory [Important Changes in the Direction of Adult Education by National Committees]. In: *Osvětová práce*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (1963), p. 163; KOUBEK, Milan: KOS začínají [KOS Starting]. In: *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, No. 18 (1963), p. 350.

42 The inclusion of “Chateau of Hradec” in the name of the centre was also clarificatory, since “many visitors including from Bohemia and Slovakia have no idea that this is a chateau,” (see HAVRLANT, Petr: *Zámek Hradec u Opavy v letech 1945–1970* [The Chateau of Hradec near Opava in the Years 1945–1970]. Manuscript, Opava 2003, p. 73 (in the Library of the Institute of Historical Sciences of the Silesian University in Opava).

43 SOKA Opava, f. ONV Opava 1960–1976, box 1690, inv. no. 1456.

The scientific research profile of the Silesian Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences was fundamentally redefined in the first half of the 1960s. Shortly before its incorporation into the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1958, its research had still been linked with “specific features of the Silesian region,” if in the overall framework of Ostravsko,⁴⁴ but the leadership of the Academy of Sciences and the regional political organs soon started to discuss a basic overhaul of its character, including its name.⁴⁵ When the Institute lost its comprehensive research profile, its original rationale faded away and with it any meaningful content. The Natural Science Department was detached from it, and the social science sections were set to tackle tasks related to the state plan under the title “The Origins and Development of Industrial Areas in Czechoslovakia,” with a special focus on the Ostrava industrial area and research on the ethnic situation in the region.⁴⁶ The change was inevitably reflected in the structure of research staff. In March 1965, the Presidium of the Regional Committee of the KSČ in Ostrava instructed the Institute to “discharge the ethnographers, folklore specialists and dialect specialists,” and to replace them by sociologists.⁴⁷ With their help, regional party leadership could soon monitor and analyse relationships between the national minorities of the North Moravian Region. Interestingly, the results of a sociological survey in February 1966 were not at all encouraging: it showed that more than fifty–seven percent of Poles felt hostility on the part of the Czechs. Respondents criticised the preference given to citizens of Czech ethnicity–nationality in appointments to various functions, spoke about, for example, teachers at Czech schools who allegedly “hated the Poles,” and complained of staff of the Regional National Committee in Frýdek–Místek who would only conduct business in Czech.⁴⁸ Typically, the evaluation report attributed these phenomena to “elements of the former National Socialist Party and the Sokol” as bearers of Czech nationalism.⁴⁹

44 *Ibid.*, f. OV KSČ Opava – Meeting of the Bureau, Record of Meeting, 11 February 1959; see also MARIÁNEK, Vladimír: *Do nové práce*, pp. 1–5.

45 GROBELNÝ, Andělín: *Cesta za vědeckým a vlastivědným uplatněním: Vzpomínky na odbornou práci ve Slezském studijním ústavu a ve Slezském ústavu ČSAV v Opavě* [The Road to Scientific and Ethnographic Validation: Memories of Specialist Work in the Silesian Study Institute and in the Silesian Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences], Part 1: 1952–1958. Manuscript, Opava December 1988, p. 81.

46 See FICEK, Viktor: *Slezský ústav ČSAV v Opavě 1948–1968* [The Silesian Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Opava 1948–1968]. Ostrava, Profil 1969, pp. 65–87.

47 *ZA Opava*, f. KV KSČ Ostrava – Meeting of the Bureau, box 218, inv. no. 63, Record of Meeting, 5 March 1965, P–845.

48 *Ibid.*, box 226, inv. no. 64, Record of Meeting of 16 September, P–886. In another place, a comment was made to the effect that among Czechs, in some places (often subconsciously) residues or remnants survive of features of patriotism of bourgeois type and a “certain local patriotism.”

49 Silesian–ness with a strong national (ethnic) edge was embodied at the time for example by the writer A. C. Nor, an agent of the Silesian Cultural Institute in Prague in 1945 and 1946. It was typical that when he wrote in his memoirs about the attitudes of the historian Vilém Plaček at the beginning of “normalisation,” he interpreted them as the personal revenge of a “Hlučičňák” (allegedly “Wilhelm Platschek” – the reference here is to natives of the Hlučín

The Communist Party saw the post-1948 anaesthetisation of Czech Silesian patriotism as an important part of the process of removing Czech-Polish tension in Těšínsko and the successful resolution of national-ethnic questions in a spirit of so-called socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism. Party organs therefore reacted very quickly and even with certain hysteria to any obvious signs of interest in Silesian identity as more than a mere historical relic. One good example was the response to a slender booklet written by a member of staff of the Ideological Department of the Regional Committee of the KSČ in Ostrava, Josef Bilan-Šinovský, entitled *Dílo Óndry Łysohorského – promarněná mince rodného kraje* [The Work of Óndra Łysohorský – Squandered Coins of of the Native Land]. It was published by the Ostrava Branch of the Czechoslovak Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge in the spring of 1960, after Vojtěch Dolejší, editor of the national weekly *Tvorba*, had refused to publish it in instalments. The subject was a prominent poet who had come into conflict with the Communist Party during the Second World War because of his theory of the “Lach nation.” Bilan-Šinovský argued that there had been no proper appreciation of Łysohorský’s 1958 collection *Aj lašské řěky plynu do moře* [Even the Lach Rivers Flow into the Sea], and that linguists and politicians had unfairly ignored the poet’s work. Deducing that “no one valued the social and intellectual questions that have stirred the land of Silesia in the past,” he wanted to explain the subject in the interest of the “preservation of national unity,” to ensure “that the unity of the working class should not be disrupted anywhere or by anything in such momentous situations as the building of a socialist society,” especially when the Ostrava region in particular needed ethnic peace and harmony.⁵⁰

It was Bilan-Šinovský’s bad luck that, just at the very same time, Václav Kopecký brought out his famous “memoirs,” in which he returned critically to the “case of Łysohorský.”⁵¹ If Bilan-Šinovský had been striving for some kind of rehabilitation

area, often considered mostly Germans), and not just the views of a communist functionary (NOR, A. C.: *Život nebyl sen: Záznam o životě českého spisovatele* [Life Was Not a Dream: The Record of the Life of a Czech Writer], Vol. 2. Brno, Atlantis 1994, p. 862). Of course, communist literary criticism had no respect for Nor’s works. According to Oldřich Rafaj, they were saturated with “local Silesian rusticity,” and their common feature was “claims of loyalty to the soil, multiplied by constant emphasis on the Silesian nature of the land and its people,” (RAFAJ, Oldřich: *Literatura a současnost: Literatura na Ostravsku 1945–1961* [Literature and the Present. Literature in the Ostrava Region 1945–1961]. Ostrava, Krajské nakladatelství 1963, p. 59). Elsewhere Rafaj wrote that the setting of Nor’s works in the Silesian countryside, “by accentuation of the adjective Silesian adds the feature of a certain specificity to his works, basically it encourages the regional tendency promoting Opavan Silesia as a distinctive separate ethnic area,” (*Ibid.*, p. 28).

50 BILAN-ŠINOVSÝ, Josef: *Dílo Óndry Łysohorského – promarněná mince rodného kraje* [The Work of Óndra Łysohorský – Squandered Coins of of the Native Land]. Ostrava, Československá společnost pro šíření politických a vědeckých znalostí, krajské oddělení 1960, p. 5.

51 KOPECKÝ, Václav: *ČSR a KSČ: Pamětní výpisy k historii Československé republiky a k boji KSČ za socialistické Československo* [The Czechoslovakia and KSČ: Memoir Extracts on the His-

for the poet, the result was the complete opposite. In June and July 1960, when his publication was discussed by the Bureau of the Regional Committee of the KSČ in Ostrava,⁵² the Ideological Department drew up a list of its faults, branding it not only unnecessary, because Soviet science and the Communist Party leadership had evidently rejected Łysohorský's conception, but downright damaging, because allegedly containing "non-Marxist, theoretically incorrect and consequently harmful anti-party theses." The party analysis started with the claim that any new contribution from Łysohorský would "inevitably end up sounding like the crisis of an intellectual who has found no footing in contemporary socialist society as a result of his unsurmounted, mistaken conception and stands apart despite his undoubted artistic qualities."

A letter to *Červený květ* in 1956, in which Łysohorský said he had been waiting for fifteen years for a wrong to be righted, was cited as proof of this. Accordingly, Bilan-Šinovský's only proper course should have been to "clearly condemn" this conception. Instead he had taken an "extremely objectivist approach" to a number of passages, and the regional ideologists claimed that "he had even joined Łysohorský's platform," stirring up "unhealthy Silesian-ness."⁵³ Party organs were particularly infuriated that Bilan-Šinovský had accorded a certain "class" substance to Łysohorský's views on national-ethnic problems up to 1945 and had followed him in hypothetical reflections of the "tribal distinctiveness of the people" in Silesia. Not even Bilan-Šinovský's claim that "our present Silesian intelligentsia is going with the people and working for a new socialist society" and so "there is no reason to multiply the number of nations of our country" could now soften the party's judgment.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Bureau of the Regional Committee of the KSČ in Ostrava in its evaluation stressed that Łysohorský should be approached not only as a writer, but as a politician and a nationalist. Bilan's concept "objectively drives out the devil with the devil [...] It cannot be ignored that only the fact that Łysohorský's work has no basis of support in our region (and so even less in our country) [...] is preventing a new irredenta, not too remote from the irredenta of Ciešlar, emerging from these revived conceptions."⁵⁵

tory of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Struggle of the the KSČ for a Socialist Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Státní nakladatelství politické literatury 1960, pp. 316–320.

52 ZA Opava, f. KV KSČ Opava – Meeting of the Bureau, box 188, inv. no. 61, Record of Meeting, 6 June 1960, P–716; *Ibid.*, Box 189, Inv. No. 61, Record of Meeting, 29 July 1960, P–721.

53 ZA Opava, f. KV KSČ Opava – Meeting of the Bureau, Box 189, Inv. No. 61, Record of Meeting, 29 July 1960, P–721.

54 BILAN-ŠINOVSÝ, J.: *Dílo Óndry Łysohorského – promarněná mince rodného kraje*, pp. 23 and 33.

55 At another point, the standpoint of the Bureau of the KV KSČ of 29 July 1960 states: "The publication of the book would cause considerable difficulties in how problems that were solved long ago are viewed, i.e. it would cause trouble instead of peace and disharmony instead of harmony."

Party organs were especially infuriated by Bilan–Šinovský’s attempts to compare Óndra Łysohorský with Petr Bezruč in both his poetry and ideas.⁵⁶ Josef Bilan–Šinovský was forced to undertake written self-criticism, his brochure was banned and most of the print-run (eight hundred and fifty copies) was ordered to be destroyed. The Ideological Department also drew attention to the involvement of the reviewers of the book, Alois Sivek, and especially Otakar Káň, who was a student of the Institute of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the KSČ at the time. The whole affair contributed to a temporary tightening up of publishing practice in the North Moravian Region.⁵⁷

The Golden 1960s?

The thaw in Czechoslovak conditions in the latter half of the 1960s brought new impulses. The city of Opava once again started emphasising its role as a regional cultural centre, and the latent tension between Opava and the regional metropolis Ostrava could resurface. In this context, one interesting phenomenon was that the official Opava organs, including the Communist Party structures, started to push for goals similar to those that had earlier been characteristic of the original Czech Silesian patriotism. Selective identification with rather conservatively conceived cultural attributes was undoubtedly a way how to exploit the potential of the borderland regional city. In 1967, the tendency was boosted by preparations for the celebrations of the centenary of the birth of Petr Bezruč (which were even included in the UNESCO cultural anniversaries list), especially the Bezruč Opava Festival in September of the same year.⁵⁸ The selective cultural interest in Silesian identity in the official bodies then resulted in support for calls to revive Silesian self-government in 1968. It is hardly insignificant in this context that as early as in January 1967, the Minister of Education and Culture Jiří Hájek, addressing the first meeting of the nation-wide committee for the Bezruč celebration in Hradec near Opava, publicly called for a change in the name “North Moravian Region” with which most

56 This is also clear in the postscript by the poet and translator of Łysohorský’s collection Josef Rumler.

57 In this context, one can point out that in 1956, the Silesian Study Institute in Opava could still publish its own theories on older Silesian history under the title *Questions of the History of Silesia* (GROBELNÝ, Andělín (ed.): *K otázkám dějin Slezska: Diskuse a materiály z konference v Opavě ve dnech 3. a 4. listopadu 1955* [Questions of the History of Silesia: Discussions and Materials from a Conference in Opava on 3 and 4 November 1955]. Ostrava, Krajský národní výbor v Ostravě 1956), a similar synthesis brought out in 1968, however, could only be published under the misleading title *The Ostrava Region up to 1848* (IDEM /ed./: *Ostravsko do roku 1848: Kapitoly k historickému vývoji Slezska a Ostravska od pravěku k revolučnímu roku 1848* [The Ostrava Region up to 1848: Chapters in the Historical Development of Silesia and the Ostrava Region from Prehistoric Times to the Revolutionary Year of 1848]. Ostrava, Profil 1968).

58 Recording of memories recounted by the then Head of the Petr Bezruč Memorial Centre in Opava, teacher and literary historian Jiří Urbanec (1932–2014) in 2007.

of the population did not identify; according to Hájek, the “year of Bezruč” ought to be an opportunity to put Silesia back into the name of the region.⁵⁹

The reawakening of Silesian patriotism in the spring of 1968 represents a relatively distinct chapter in our account of the subject. Although a few months in 1968 and the beginning of 1969 were too short a time for the revival of “Silesian-ness,” and although the phenomenon played no conspicuous major role in national events or even in regional developments (it was more or less limited to Opavsko),⁶⁰ we might still discern in its manifestation at this point a certain parallel to desires for the fulfilment of distinctive Slovak and Moravian identities. On the other hand, efforts to re-establish (rather superficial) continuity with expressions of “Silesian-ness” in the years 1945–1947, in turn raised increasingly urgently posed questions about the viability of the Silesian idea and its future prospects, to which the broader Czechoslovak public remained generally cool and sceptical.⁶¹

Silesian patriotism found partial expression in proposals for administrative or constitutional recognition of Silesia within the republic at the end of the 1950s. The demand for restoring Silesian self-government thus returned to public discourse.⁶² In general, however, we can say that the notion of a land organisation or a kind of fourfold federation (with Moravia and Silesia as distinctive entities alongside Bohemia and Slovakia) was already encountering a great many opponents even at this early stage.

More significant were activities in the cultural sphere that picked up the broken thread of cultural developments in the immediate postwar period. The Maticе opavská was revived, absorbing the Těšín Silesian Cultural Organisation for Popular Education, and renamed simply The Silesian Cultural Organisation, or Maticе slezská in Czech. It started to publish a review *Slezsko: Kultura a země* [Silesia: Culture and Land]. On its pages, Leopold Peřich, for instance, returned to his views from the postwar years, while the demographer Lubomír Bajger offered a new conception of Silesia, recommending that attention should be devoted to folklore and culture and to the tackling of current questions about the economic and social

59 See URBANEC, Jiří: Za rehabilitaci názvu “Slezsko” [For the Rehabilitation of the Name “Silesia”]. In: *Nové Opavsko*, Vol. 10, No. 13 (30 March 1968), p. 3.

60 This regional limitation is shown for example in the following study: PAVELČÍKOVÁ, Nina: Tři opavská jara: Obrodný a normalizační proces v letech 1967–1970 [Three Opava Springs: The Revival and Normalisation Process in the Year 1967–1970]. In: *Vlastivědné listy Slezska a severní Moravy*, Vol. 18, No. 1 and 2 (1992), pp. 6–10 and 14–18; Vol. 19, No. 1 (1993), pp. 11–13.

61 See e.g. RENČ, Václav: Zemské zřízení a národní kultura [Land Organisation and National Culture]. In: *Index*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1968), p. 70.

62 This topic was considered in detail in an article by the Plačeks: PLAČKOVÁ, Magda – PLAČEK, Vilém: Boj o slezskou samosprávu v roce 1968 [The Battle over Silesian Self-Government in 1968]. In: *Ročenka Okresního archivu v Opavě*, No. 10. Opava, Okresní archiv v Opavě 1990, pp. 16–46; see also JIRÁSEK, Zdeněk: Slezská idea v poválečném Československu, p. 190.

development.⁶³ There were proposals for the founding of a Silesian university, the Association of Silesian Artists was revived and Jiří Urbanec demanded the rehabilitation of the name “Silesia” in the regional press.⁶⁴

Events were soon to push expressions of “Silesian identity” into the background once more, and the buds and shoots of individual ideas and suggestions were to wither in the frost following the Soviet invasion. The theme of Silesian traditions was to find a public response and manifestations in society only after the two decades of “normalisation” – at the beginning of the 1990s. However, that is a different chapter, beyond the declared limits of this study.

The Czech version of the article, entitled Nechtěné Slezsko. Reflexe českého “slezanství” v poválečném Československu (1945–1969), was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2010), pp. 421–440.

63 BAJGER, Lubomír: Vyjádření k anketě [Response to a Survey] In: *Slezsko: Kultura a země*, Vol. 2, No. 1 and 2 (1969), pp. 8–11 and 27–28.

64 See note No. 58.

Lessons from the Crisis Development

The Picture of the Prague Spring in “Normalisation Prose”

Alena Fialová (Šporková)

Every historical event is first stored in the memory of the individual as a personal experience, then is captured and simultaneously interpreted in the media, and then is firmly anchored in different types of texts: among others, in works of art. Under the influence of these interpretations, the picture of a historical event is created in the public's awareness, which takes the form of steady, simplified patterns. A specific way for their formation is capturing historical events in literature; in contrast to scientific methods, it does not claim to offer factual accuracy and completeness; however, due to its accessibility to a wider circle of readers and its aesthetic and emotional effects, it has a much greater chance of integrating the interpretations and evaluations into the general consciousness of society. The image of history, captured in artistically impressive works that have managed to gain wide popularity, can become part of the general memory of the nation, which is the condition for self-reflection of every single national community and as such participates in forming its identity.

Creating a new identity, which would be adopted by the whole society, was the aim of the representatives of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Attempts to enforce their own concept of history (which in itself indirectly included the image of their present) was based on the belief that communist ideology was a historical necessity, in other words “the iron logic of history,” which was to lead inevitably to the ideal of a classless communist society, realisable after the revolutionary seizure of power by the working class under the leadership of the Communist Party.

After the Communist Coup of February 1948, the ideologised interpretation of history was meant to incorporate these changes into the context of national history and the “revolutionary traditions of the nation” and, therefore, legitimise and glorify them.¹ For this reason, communist propaganda sought to massively reinforce the general public’s awareness of the official interpretation of history, among other things, by using aesthetically impressive and compelling works of art in order to create an idealised self-image. Art-works were not only to offer the “correct” interpretation of history, but also to contribute to its general acceptance, and thus to the identification of society with communist thought.

Emphasis on positive and negative sides of the socialist present and the paths which led to it in national history were to set an appropriate interpretation of specific events, including a system of causes and consequences (in fiction amplified by literary means – the choice of protagonists and their characteristics, preferences for certain motifs, use of figurative designs, specific narrative strategies, and the like); and, finally, literature was to offer indicative solutions to “critical” moments. The communist image of history therefore consisted of mandatory schemata, its own Marxist philosophy (class struggle, the role of social classes in the historical development and so on), and it also applied them to particular human lives, their environment and historical events – in some cases continuity with the current situation was stressed, in other cases its significance was suppressed.

The depiction of recent history had a specific status, evolving from the time of the communist seizure of power, which was perceived as a time “in which the roots of the future, today’s and tomorrow’s things were put down,”² and as the beginning of a new era. Given the need to confirm the new, ideologically compliant interpretation of history, official authorities recognised the value of the genre of the social or socio-historical novel that recorded these events as well as the orientation of the individual in a broader context. For this reason, writers were encouraged over and over again to create a “representative” piece of work that would “truly” capture the historical developments containing important milestones in the recent past, perceived as a victory which paved the way for an ideal future.

Socialist-realism literature of the early 1950s attempted to offer the desired epic works which were to demonstrate the communist seizure of power as the inevitable consummation of the historical development in all its complexity. Key moments that were presented as those that shaped the current situation were highlighted; the experience of the economic crisis of the 1930s, the Munich events, and especially the Second World War culminating in the liberation of the country by the Red Army

1 For more information about the problem the legitimacy of power and historical traditions in the communist regime, see KOPEČEK, Michal: *Ve službách dějin, ve jménu národa: Historie jako součást legitimizace komunistických režimů ve střední Evropě v letech 1948–50* [In the Service of History, in the Name of the Nation: History as a Part of Legitimation of Communist Regimes in Central Europe 1948–1950]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2001), pp. 23–43.

2 DOSTÁL, Vladimír: *Minulost stále přítomná* [The Past Still Present]. In: *Tvorba*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (1975), p. 8.

and the subsequent “victory of socialism” were therefore emphasised. In contrast, the so-called social novel of the second half of the 1950s and the 1960s tried to avoid such ideological constructions and focused on the individual and his or her uneasy orientation to historical events, which later changed even further with the portrayal of a demonstrative probing of the dichotomy between individual destiny and relentless history.

The idea of a social novel that would capture the identification of the individual with social changes re-appeared in the 1970s and 1980s and brought in a new wave of novels with the themes of war and the so-called “Victorious February.” However, another landmark was added presenting another turning point in the development of the socialist state: the events of 1968, the so-called Prague Spring terminated by Soviet occupation.

Literature, from the perspective of agreeing with the “normalisation” of reality, wanted to reflect on these events, referred to them as “counter-revolution,” and attempted to find an ideologically suitable explanation of why the “logic of history” had come to this “critical” point. It had to co-create and consolidate the new interpretation of recent events, still vivid in the memory of most of society, and thus help the acceptance and legitimisation of the ongoing “new course.” The question of the continuity and discontinuity of the present with the events of the “crisis years” and the previous periods was problematic. The return of “normalisation” to the ideals and values of the 1950s even meant a more or less direct polemic with the literature of the 1960s. “The motif of the inconsistency of the human with society and history was emphasised in every possible way,” compared to previous and subsequent stages.³

The goal of this paper is to analyse engaged social prose from the period of the 1970s and 1980s which reflected the Czechoslovak events of 1968.⁴ It focuses on schematic and model solutions typical of the “normalisation” interpretation of these events used by the representatives of the communist regime in order to enforce a binding interpretation of history (i.e. in accordance with the document *Lessons from the Crisis Development in the Party and Society after the 13th Congress of the KSČ* [the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]) as portrayed in fiction. This ideological re-interpretation of history was accepted only formally despite all the efforts made on the part of the Communists; indeed, it failed to integrate into wider public awareness. This says something about the application of ideological legitimisation structures, the changes and new requirements of the “normalisation” regime and its attempt to adapt history to its own needs.

3 DOKOUPIL, Blahoslav: Kvývojovým proměněním prózy tematikou Února [About the Developmental Changes of Prose with the Topic of February]. In: *Česká literatura*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1982), p. 160.

4 The author has published a monograph and devotes a whole chapter to the problem in it. FIALOVÁ, Alena: *Poučení z krizového vývoje: Poválečná česká společnost v reflexi normalizační prózy* [Lessons Learnt from the Crisis Development: Postwar Czech Society in the Reflection of Normalisation Prose]. Praha, Academia 2014, pp. 239–256.

The topic of the year 1968 also appeared in unofficial samizdat and exile literary works (for example, in the novels *Mirákl* [Miracle] by Josef Škvorecký, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera, *Z deníku kontrarevolucionáře* [From the Diary of a Counter-Revolutionary] by Pavel Kohout or *Štěpení* [Cleavage] by Karel Pecka and more).⁵ Keeping in mind that this is a topic that would require a separate analysis, I deliberately omit these works and focus solely on the official publication space of “normalisation” Czechoslovakia.

The Literary-Historical Context

Literary works that would be open to the topic of the Prague Spring and the subsequent occupation were not published in large numbers in the 1970s and 1980s (in fact, there are only sixteen analysed works from the period under scrutiny). In terms of genre, the plots combine psychological, adventure, detective and socialism-building themes. Typically, when it came to length, these were rather short novels, not the desired, extensive social novel that, in fact, never came into being.

The books being reviewed were published in two waves: initially, they appeared in the first half of the 1970s (between 1973 and 1975), that is in the years that could be labelled as the “return of Socialist Realism to its original starting positions” (Hana Hrzalová),⁶ when the “crisis years” represented “a still not cooled experience” (Vladimír Dostál).⁷ The second phase took place in the early 1980s (1981–1985) when the topic was viewed with a certain historical distance. In the latter period, prose dealt with the theme of the political maturation of young people and of joining the new society (novels such as *Zádrhel* [Bottlenecks], *Toulavý čas* [Stray Time], *Kulisáci* [Stage-Hands]).⁸

Among the authors of the works in question, we do not find names which would be a guarantee of any great literary quality – in fact, they were mostly average or

5 ŠKVORECKÝ, Josef: *Mirákl* [Miracle]. Toronto, Sixty-Eight Publishers 1972; KUNDERA, Milan: *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí* [The Unbearable Lightness of Being]. Toronto, Sixty-Eight Publishers 1985 (first published in French: *l'Insoutenable légèreté de l'être*. Paris, Gallimard 1984); KOHOUT, Pavel: *Z deníku kontrarevolucionáře aneb Životy od tanku k tanku* [From the Diary of a Counter-Revolutionary alias Lives from Tanks to Tanks]. Praha, Mladá fronta 1997 (first published in German: *Aus dem Tagebuch eines Konterrevolutionärs*. Luzern, Bucher 1969); PECKA, Karel: *Štěpení* [Cleavage] (samizdat 1974 and Toronto, Sixty-Eight Publishers 1974).

6 HRZALOVÁ, Hana: O pravdivý umělecký obraz současnosti [The Real Artistic Image of the Present]. In: RZOUNEK, Vítězslav (ed.): *Strana literaturě – literatura straně: Sborník statí o české literaturě let 1971–1975* [From Party to Literature – From Literature to the Party: Proceedings about Czech Literature 1971–1975]. Praha, Svoboda 1976, p. 48.

7 DOSTÁL, Vladimír: Popáleniny roku 1968 [The Burns of 1968]. In: *Tvorba*, Vol. 6, No. 21 (1974), p. 8.

8 HRABAL, Karel: *Zádrhel* [Bottlenecks]. Praha, Práce 1982; KLEVIS, Vladimír: *Toulavý čas* [Stray Time]. Praha, Československý spisovatel 1974; ČEJKA, Jaroslav: *Kulisáci* [Stage-Hands]. Praha, Mladá fronta 1985.

even below-average authors, some of them functionaries in the official structures (Bohumil Říha, Bohumil Nohejl, Jaroslav Čejka). Most of them stopped publishing after November 1989. Only a few managed to move to other genres, such as literature for children and youth (Bohumil Říha, Vladimír Klevis), or those whose names were somewhat more famous from film or television projects (Ladislav Pecháček, for instance, the author of the popular movie series about “básníci” [poets] from the late 1980s and 1990s).

Official Marxist literary criticism of social works dealing with the question of the Prague Spring closely followed and welcomed these novels and called for other similar writings. In addition, it even labelled the first works as repayments by which “contemporary Czech prose acknowledges the duty to come to terms in its own way with the thorny issue of the years 1968–1969,” and hoped that, in the course of time, this would involve a “greater diversity of topics as well as artistic approaches.”⁹ Even though these works did not come into being as a result of a direct political order (such as, for instance, the television series *Třicet Případů majora Zemana* [Thirty Cases of Major Zeman] in which the Ministry of the Interior was involved in terms of preparation), their publication was supported to the maximum extent.

For this reason, in the contemporary official context, these works received a lot of advantages in order to help them reach potential readers: most of the books had several editions; the number in which they were published was generally ten to thirty thousand copies. If the works had first been published by a regional publishing house, the subsequent edition was published by the more prestigious publishing house named *Československý spisovatel* [The Czechoslovak Writer] (this, for example, was the case with the four editions of the novel *Velká voda* [High Water] by Bohumil Nohejl). The award of literary prizes likewise corresponded to this warm welcome on the part of the regime: *Kulisáci* by Jaroslav Čejka won the Prize of the Publishing House *Mladá Fronta*, *Velká voda* by Bohumil Nohejl¹⁰ was awarded the Antonín Zápotocký Prize and the Union of Czech Writers Prize in 1983, *Vabank* [Gamble] by Alexej Pludek¹¹ won the competition organised by the Czech Literary Fund, the Union of Czech Writers and Czechoslovak publishing houses on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of February 1948. Many of these books demonstrated their links with society and were devoted to anniversaries such as the liberation of the country by the Red Army in 1945 or the February Coup of 1948. Some authors also received the title of “Meritorious Writer” (Alexej Pludek, Bohumil Nohejl and others) and gained other benefits that the position of a privileged “normalisation” author brought with it.

Although, as a rule, the first reviews marked the specific work as an “engrossing book” or a “successful contribution to the depiction of our time,” or at the least a kind of “promising depiction,” the call for a representative, convincing work remained unanswered. The published prose formed, according to the reviewers,

9 POLÁK, Josef: Dvě bitvy [Two Battles]. In: *Literární měsíčník*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (1973), p. 91.

10 NOHEJL, Bohumil: *Velká voda* [High Water]. Plzeň, Západočeské nakladatelství 1973.

11 PLUDEK, Alexej: *Vabank* [Gamble]. Praha, Československý spisovatel 1974.

merely a “hotbed” from which the “still missed and still exhorted novel that would depict the reality of those years adequately and, at the same time, artistically truly” could grow (as Marek Fikar wrote in 1981).¹² However, as in fact these were obviously engaged works of an inferior artistic quality which in practice did not find a wide readership, a critical re-assessment usually appeared after all: for example, according to Vlastislav Hnízdo, Alexej Pludek’s *Vabank* was rightly awarded the prize in the literary contest of the Czech Literary Fund because of its “ideological conviction and artistic power,”¹³ nevertheless, only a year later, Hana Hrzalová criticised the author for ill-conceived, cheap and even naïve arguments.¹⁴ Nohejl’s *Velká voda* (which received two prizes and was published in four editions) was, at first, hailed as a “success” for our prose and a “new, clean, dramatic, optimistic and socialist-realist work” (Jiřina Klimentová).¹⁵ On the other hand, Vladimír Dostál criticised it for its “not exactly inventive, trite journalistic arguments” that were frail and needed support so that they would not fall apart.¹⁶ In contrast to Nohejl, Dostál praised the novel *Svědomy* [Conscience] written by František Kopecký.¹⁷ On the other hand, Kopecký was criticised by Štěpán Vlašín for simplistic, lifeless and schematic characters.¹⁸

None of these works, as a matter of fact, received a definite and unambiguous welcome as if official criticism was not sure what to do with them; they reproached them for “journalistic” arguments and focus; the obligatory complaint was the statement that the authors did not penetrate the “essence” and only “adhered to the surface.” Setbacks were initially attributed to a lack of historical distance and as a result “a lot of problems and relationships were still too painful.”¹⁹ However, the absence of the desired and awaited high-quality works about the problem under scrutiny led to pessimistic statements about the issue in the early 1980s. It was noted that there were “few works of prose that would tackle the thorny issue of recent history, especially the vexed situation of the crisis-like 1960s”²⁰ and that a novel of great value with a substantial political focus was “probably still

12 FIKAR, Marek: Červená rozeta [The Red Rosette]. In: *Nové knihy*, Vol. 30, No. 38 (1981), p. 1.

13 HNÍZDO, Vlastislav: O novém románu Alexeje Pludka [About the New Novel by Alexej Pludek]. In: *O knihách a autorech* [About Books and Authors], Vol. 21, No. 4 (summer 1974), p. 11.

14 HRZALOVÁ, Hana: Pokus o politický román [A Political Novel Attempt]. In: *Rudé právo* (21 January 1975), p. 5.

15 KLIMENTOVÁ, Jiřina: O jednom velkém boji [About One Big Struggle]. In: *IBID.* (25 August 1973), p. 5.

16 DOSTÁL, Vladimír: Popáleniny roku 1968, p. 8.

17 KOPECKÝ, František: *Svědomy* [Conscience]. České Budějovice, Růže 1973.

18 VLAŠÍN, Štěpán: První sonda [The First Probe]. In: *Romboid*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1974), p. 46.; *Ibid.*: *Ve škole života: O české próze sedmdesátých let* [In the School of Life: About Czech Prose of the 1970s]. Praha, Československý spisovatel 1980, pp. 194–196.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 46 and 194.

20 IDEM: Vývojové tendence české prózy sedmdesátých let. IDEM: *Ve škole života*, p. 17.

beyond the power of today's authors" (František Cinger).²¹ In this case an absurd situation came into being – typical of the whole period – where the propagated solution (i.e. "true" depiction of the events) was formally more or less seen as something that was practically impossible (in like manner, Zdenko Pavelka asked on the pages of *Rudé právo* whether the "topic of 1968 was really such thin ice for authors or even publishers").²² Without any illusions about the need for artistic values, however, František Cinger formulated requirements for engaged literature on the pages of *Rudé právo*: deficiencies, according to him, "cannot refute the meaning and necessity of such novels as well as attempts to write them. In this case, even an unsuccessful attempt is valuable."²³

"Normalisation" prose dealing with the topic of 1968 was exceptionally reflected in the exile circles. Josef Škvorecký noticed the novel *Postel s nebesy* [A Canopy Bed] written by Karel Houba,²⁴ as an example suitable for understanding the metamorphosis of the hero in "the third development phase of Socialist Realism."²⁵ Škvorecký and also his wife, Zdena Salivarová, wrote about Pludek's *Vabank*.²⁶ The novel attracted attention for two reasons: firstly, easily deciphered characters from the real literary world of the 1960s stuck out in the book (personalities who actually functioned in the dissent or exile: Pavel Kohout, Václav Havel, Milan Kundera, Gabriel Laub and others). Secondly, because of Pludek's aggressive anti-Semitism which was also odd in the home context, *Vabank* was perceived in exile circles as a "subject for a psychiatrist more than for a literary scientist,"²⁷ and it was likewise understood as a confirmation of the deep decline of officially published literature in Czechoslovakia. The novel *Vabank*, partly because of Pludek's involvement in politics and his polemics in the Czechoslovak daily press (*Rudé právo*, *Špígl*, *Lidové noviny*), was also in the spotlight after 1989. As a result, it apparently became the best-known example of "normalisation" prose dealing with the topic of the Prague Spring in broader awareness.²⁸

Even though the causes and course of the Prague Spring in Pludek's presentation may seem with hindsight as a caricature, many of his arguments and depictions

21 CINGER, František: Návrat majora Zemana [The Return of Major Zeman]. In: *Rudé právo* (12 September 1983), p. 5.

22 PAVELKA, Zdenko: To horké léto [A Hot Summer]. In: *Ibid.* (25 July 1983), p. 5.

23 CINGER, F.: Návrat majora Zemana.

24 HOUBA, Karel: *Postel s nebesy* [A Canopy Bed]. Praha, Melantrich 1976.

25 ŠKVORECKÝ, Josef: Několik poznámek k psychopatologii současné české prózy [Several Remarks about Psychopatia of Contemporary Czech Literature]. In: ŠKVORECKÝ, Josef – BROUSEK, Antonín: *Na brigádě*. Toronto, Sixty-Eight Publishers 1979, pp. 281–294.

26 SALIVAROVÁ, Zdena: Pludek jde na vabank a Levít je prevít [Pludek Goes to the Gamble and Levít is a Prick]. In: *Svědectví*, Vol. 12, No. 48 (1974), pp. 771–775; ŠKVORECKÝ, J.: Několik poznámek k psychopatologii současné české prózy.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

28 The Zeman tales were quite known about; however, more than from because the book version because of the TV series *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman* first showed between 1975 and 1980. That is why I deal with them even though I omit the other popular production about the year 1968.

repeatedly appeared in the other analysed works as well. For this reason, it is appropriate to at least sketch the main storyline. The principal character, the engineer Bohata, realised upon his return from the Near East, where he worked, that the prophecy of his Arab friend was becoming reality: Israel still tormented the poor and peace-loving Arabs, wanting to provoke war, and Jews and their henchmen in the West eagerly helped them. Bohata's friend, Vladivoj Tomek, who was a writer, was totally destroyed workwise at the time the story was taking place. The plot continues: whereas literary losers who stole from the classics and wrote second-rate, obscure, incomprehensible and pornographic novels, had maximum possible space and opportunities and who, because of their connections, had their work translated around the world, he, a Communist, who had stuck to his old and proven principles, was forbidden to publish. Alongside this, the story showed Czech artists and the intelligentsia sunk in dissipation and leading unrestrained lives filled with alcohol, pseudo-intellectual conversation, cheating, fraud, and a lust for power, money and sex – indeed the book's ideological leader of the Prague Spring, Horský, even lived with two mistresses at the same time. The novel went on to say that only Soviet brotherly help saved the people from the moral quagmire, the danger that threatened the whole nation. Subsequent emigration separated the “wheat from the chaff” and cleansed Czechoslovakia was able to start a new life, Pludek maintained.

The Burns of 1968

“They had nothing more in common,” Vladimír Dostál wrote in 1974 when he characterised prose depicting the events of the Prague Spring.²⁹ He identified the “burns of 1968” as their sole common feature. The following analysis focuses on and attempts to find the common features which formed an ideologically suitable depiction of these “crisis” events. Not only the social development taking place from January to the August occupation, but also the wider context, motivations and goals of the reform movement, participation of social strata in the political events and the orientation of the individual to the new conditions, all these represented the main problems that were to be interpreted and depicted while using ideologically acceptable arguments and premises. A complex historical-social picture of the events formed a more general pattern or construction and, at the same time, how-to guidance and persuasive functions and propagandist methodology were likewise used.

The basic problem of all social prose was the depiction of the broader context; the continuity and phases of historical development formed parts of the puzzle. The characteristics of the causes of the current social situation and, concomitantly, the actions and behaviour of individual characters, were the result of these.

Recent historical milestones and changes in society were, of course, viewed through the ideological prism of historical-materialism, resulting in an interpre-

29 DOSTÁL, V.: Popáleniny roku 1968, p. 8.

tation of historical development that was adapted to Czech national experiences. The deeper the excursus into history, the more stable the motifs and plots typical of the official communist interpretation of history appeared.

In the retrospective passages, the historical development, starting at the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s, was depicted by means of memories and reflections on the part of the main protagonists. This phase of development was particularly connected to unemployment, hunger, the shooting of workers and was contrasted with the gluttonous and greedy life of the rich, exploiting strata. In like manner, the Second World War was interpreted by using typical and in Socialist-Realism literature binding schemata in which the resistance activities of the Communists were contrasted with the collaboration of the bourgeoisie. After the depiction of the war, which the literary figures because of the prevailing forced labour spent mostly in Germany or less often in concentration camps, the liberation of the country by the Red Army followed. This experience was connected to a friendly meeting with a simple Soviet soldier and served as a reminder of Soviet victims, while also symbolising the beginning of new life: “The war took over our life. Soon after it finished, each and every one of us underwent two revolutions: a personal one and a social one.”³⁰ It was remarkable that characters who deviated from this pattern of identification with the communist idea were ranked with “the other,” hostile side; misunderstanding and the rejection of socialism led, according to these authors, to the betrayal of the nation (in Pludek’s *Vabank*, the character of the emigrant Levít and the “reformist” Horký were described in such a way because they “avoided” war by fleeing to England).

The February takeover of 1948 only confirmed the logical outcome of the previous events and, therefore, there was no need to describe it in any great detail. Highlighting February 1948 served as a differentiation of two eras (before “February” and after), or for general proclamations expressing the support and recognition of the communist ideal: “The revolution in forty-eight – that is also us.”³¹

The Dual Heritage of the 1950s

When it came to the characteristics of the history of the state and society, it was not possible to disregard the period that represented the fundamental moment for the creation of the socialist society, and yet this, in turn, carried within it the “strain of deformation,” which fully revealed itself during the less tense period of the late 1960s. The time in question was the 1950s, especially the early 1950s, the period entitled the era of the personality cult, schematism or dogmatism.

While the interpretation of pre-war, wartime and the February events was based on older, already verified patterns, evaluation of the 1950s and the image of this

30 ŘÍHA, Bohumil: *Doktor Meluzin* [Doctor Meluzin]. Praha, Československý spisovatel 1973, p. 110.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

decade in literature had to be newly shaped because fiction from the late 1950s featuring the Stalinist period lacked the necessary time distance, while the literature of the 1960s was characterised by a rather critical re-assessment of the past. A different situation emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. In this period, the critical heritage of the 1960s, which was understood as a “deformation” of Socialist Realism literature, was rejected; an acceptable interpretation of the coming of socialism that would fit into the pattern of the successful construction of a new society, itself disrupted in the 1960s and to which “normalisation” was to return, had to be created and enforced. For this reason, evaluating the 1950s represented a considerable problem for the Communists: from the ideological point of view, it was necessary that this decade be shown as a successful period to which “normalisation” society itself aspired. On the other hand, however, previously published evidence about the wide-ranging unlawfulness and the experience of the people themselves (and, therefore, of potential readers) made the undoubtedly positive image dubious and problematic.

The solution to this dilemma was the creation of two contrasting models that were not, however, necessarily in contradiction. One was a more traditional model presenting the picture of a heroic period of enforcing communist ideals and building the bases of socialism, even though sometimes a little “hastily.” The other presented the period of “infatuation” in the context of the “infatuation” of the late 1960s. According to this model, both periods were marked by an analogical “deviation,” a right and left deformation of socialist development, in which, typically, the same people were involved. The myth of the heroic times was somewhat disrupted, but it brought a lot more practical possibilities: to discredit a great many of the reform Communists who significantly had engaged themselves in their youth and in the period in question.

Thus, the main character in Alexej Pludek’s *Vabank* asked himself the following question: “How could people trust those who wanted to remedy things they had done themselves or how were they to believe in the new model of socialism if those who propagated it were those who had enforced the model they were now criticising.”³² Ladislav Pecháček used the same model in his *Červená rozeta* [Red Rosette]. Its main hero was a poet who believed the “reform process” could revive his former glory and status, which he had enjoyed as an official member of the socialist youth movement in the 1950s (Pecháček treated his characters as caricatures and, therefore, added to the poet’s mental impotence, sexual impotence, which was only “cured” when his partner wore a socialist youth movement shirt). The main protagonist of Houba’s novel *Postel s nebesy* distanced himself from what had happened in the 1950s and also automatically distanced himself from the events of the 1960s – it was still the same tomfoolery for him. In Procházka’s novel *Lišky mění srst* [Foxes Change Their Fur], a French collaborator of the State Security condemned Czechoslovak dissidents by openly putting the two periods

32 PLUDEK, A.: *Vabank*, s. 56.

on the same level: “You want revenge for the 1950s and, therefore you want to replace them [...] with new 1950s, this time coming from the right!”³³

Nevertheless, despite these statements, the first model prevailed in Procházka’s novels. Characterising the 1950s as a heroic time with a clear enemy and a clear division between good and evil³⁴ was more suitable for the popular detective genre than the image of “infatuation” and heroes who accommodated themselves to the changes in the political atmosphere. The model under scrutiny was likewise more logical for a novel offering a building-socialism topic, the most prominent example of which was Nohejl’s *Velká voda*, at least in the analysed literature. In it, there was a parallel in the composition of the narrative between the 1950s and 1960s presenting them as two discontinuous phases: the first storyline reflected the time of collectivisation and the second put the “crisis” year 1968 in contrast with it; whereas hard work was being done and socialism was being built in the first phase, things were being broken down in the second. The main character had to fight with the very same enemies in both cases.

A third approach offered a certain settling with the two above mentioned models. An admission of the mistakes made was part of it, but an attempt to improve on them prevailed on the part of the Communists (even though this was being done in indirect and indeterminate statements). Removing the mistakes arising from good ideals was also a form of a certain “cleansing” of the time when “socialism was being built” and, in a way, it enabled a return to these ideals: “Mistakes have been made. [...] When a bearing is loosened, it has to be repaired; it does not mean that the whole machine be thrown out as scrap.”³⁵ – “Did we make mistakes then? We did. However, we confessed to making these mistakes honestly, we decently tried to remedy them.”³⁶ In the 1950s, the Communist Party was presented as a mother who, fearful for her child’s safety, tightens its protective harness too firmly.³⁷ The easiest way to put this “cleaning” in train was to reveal the “blunders” as the misconduct of individuals: the main protagonist of Kopecký’s novel *Svědění* had a fellow-Communist colleague in mind when emphasising that he had “warned her several times” not to be so keen with coming up with directives and regulations and not to consider people as things she could play with.³⁸ The chairman of an agricultural cooperative saw the reason why “things are being thrown at the Communists by many people” in like manner: “These Mareks were on the top, in

33 PROCHÁZKA, Jiří: *Lišky mění srst* [Foxes Change Their Fur]. Plzeň, Západočeské nakladatelství 1983, p. 68.

34 See JANÁČEK, Pavel: Aby revoluce zůstala revolucí [So that a Revolution Stays a Revolution]. In: *Respekt*, Vol. 10, No. 38 (1999), p. 18.

35 HRABAL, K.: *Zádrhel*, p. 118.

36 PROCHÁZKA, Jiří: *Hrdelní pře* [Hanging Case]. Praha, Československý spisovatel 1978, p. 143.

37 KOVANDA, Zbyněk: *Palec na spoušti* [Thumb on the Trigger]. Plzeň, Západočeské nakladatelství 1975, s. 71.

38 KOPECKÝ, F.: *Svědění*, p. 89.

the middle and on the bottom. They could bend over backwards and one forgot to distinguish between them.”³⁹

These interpenetrative approaches enabled the originator of the “deformations” to be identified and to be given a specific shape. In accordance with the models mentioned, a traditional ideological scheme was applied: class-typified characters fit the classic model of conflict between the progressive strata and the reactionary elements who wanted to reverse socialism and renew capitalism. Consequently, as it was described, members of the petty bourgeoisie came to power in the local structures – “provincial petty bourgeoisie,” landlords, intelligentsia torn away from the working class, students and “lordly-like” workers. Their opponents, those who wanted to save the situation (and, by doing so, socialism as such, which was in danger) and keep their once hardily fought for rights, were simple workers or peasants who were led, as in the socialism-building prose of the 1950s, by a hardcore, convinced and faithful Communist, as a rule a local chairman of the local organisation of the KSČ who gained respect by his calm and wise approach, the contemporary literature maintained. (This open class antagonism was explicitly formulated in *Vabank*, for instance, in prose combining all the models of causes and culprits: “On the one hand, a kind of a Czech maverick of working-class parents, a little bit stubborn and headstrong, sensitive and generous at the same time; on the other hand, a villain from the exploiting strata, arrogant, smug and foreign to our country.”)⁴⁰

The second model, which rejected the heritage of the 1950s and the “cult of personality” as a time of “wanderings,” saw the following plot behind the problem: persons who had formerly engaged themselves, gained popularity and “changed coats” in the new situation as reform Communists. Their easy adaptation to the actual political course, presented as a negative quality, proof of manipulability, still remained the same. The most significant literary characters fitting this pattern were Karel Rott from Pecháček’s *Červená rozeta*⁴¹ and Jan Havran of *Vabank*. Both (and partly also the self-confident poet Daneš mentioned below) were designed to resemble a real person at the time these novels came into being, one who was already a dissident and, therefore, an “enemy” of the “normalisation” conditions – Pavel Kohout.

If the prose depicted the culprits in the events of the 1950s, their victims had to appear on the scene as well. These victims, often negatively portrayed in terms of ordinary society, had been affected politically; more precisely they were people who had been expelled from schools or sacked from employment, farmers who stood against collectivisation, and first and foremost political prisoners. Given that the recognition of the legitimacy of their political rehabilitation would logically imply a challenge to the accuracy of communist intervention, the tactics chosen

39 NOHEJL, B.: *Velká voda*, p. 134.

40 PLUDEK, A.: *Vabank*, p. 76.

41 PECHÁČEK, Ladislav: *Červená rozeta* [Red Rosette]. Praha, Melantrich 1981.

were intended to have the very opposite effect: the aim was to challenge the credibility of the victims.

In the engaged “normalisation” prose, such people still remained enemies and, moreover, they became the most ardent and even fanatical supporters of the “new course.” Because of “less vigilance” on the part of the Communist Party and its central leadership they first achieved – on the local level – power, and very quickly the victims became “hunters”: a frequent motif, connected with the politically affected people, was a hunt for Communists with revenge being the main goal. In particular, in the case of political prisoners, now gathering in Klub 231, the original accusation was never challenged and their despicable stance against the Communists served only to confirm the rightfulness and legitimacy of eliminating them from society as dangerous elements. The complaints of “kulaks,” affected by collectivisation, were presented as groundless relics of the past, whose demands would mean destroying the certainties of the present. For this reason, such persons did not find support in their attempt to re-evaluate collectivisation: even though the Communists “stroved in many cases,”⁴² the majority of village-cooperative members were satisfied and did not desire the “old order” to return: “The people here are afraid of only one thing [...] that somebody of you in Prague would go mad and would want to return cattle and soil.”⁴³ – [...] you fools, all are happy to be in the cooperative!”⁴⁴

Unambiguously negative portrayals of former politically affected people, however, had their counterpart, and hence a formula for the conduct and attitudes of characters who did not take a stand on rehabilitation and who distanced themselves from the whole “revival process” were shown as having no alternative but to accept the remedy from the hands of those who were involved in the events at the time. These were victims of “infatuated” Communists of the second model, those, who exchanged their fanaticism of the time for engaging in the reform movement. Therefore, in *Vabank*, former students expelled from universities threw the following words into the face of the representative of the Prague Spring, Jan Havran, who once played a part in the university purges: “You should shut up and pack up your Prague Spring, hang up your human face and leave the reviving efforts. We do not give a damn about your resurgence!”⁴⁵

The level of criticism was also considered in terms of the moral right of the protagonists to criticise (“not so much about whether and what criticism was necessary, but rather about who had the moral right to criticise”)⁴⁶: those who had once discredited themselves, their problematic moral profile, even the principle of rehabilitation itself, are challenged as they condemn the period of the 1950s and draw implications from it for everyone except themselves: the poet Rott from Pecháček’s *Červená rozeta*, who famous for naïve communist poems comprising ideology and

42 KOPECKÝ, F.: *Svědění*, pp. 134–135.

43 PROCHÁZKA, J.: *Hrdelní pře*, p. 149.

44 JELEN, Josef: *Přezrálé léto* [Overripe Summer]. Praha, Práce 1984, p. 18.

45 PLUDEK, A.: *Vabank*, p. 222.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

love, paradoxically required the departure of those who had compromised themselves then; in Nohejl's *Velká voda*, a man wrote a critical article about the 1950s and collectivisation which, at the time, "tried to liquidate everyone who did not want to join the cooperative," and now "makes martyrs of anti-state elements."⁴⁷

The Core of the Nation ... And the Others

The demand for a holistic view of society, the desired social novel, was supposed to bring a "clarification" of the motivation of the nation that had identified with the reform movement and influenced even the nature of the roles of the social strata in the year 1968.

The traditional communist opposition of the working strata and the surviving remnants of class enemies, former bourgeoisie, playing, according to official communist doctrine, consistently positive or negative roles in historical development, had to take shape also in this period. A new image, however, awaited those strata whose role was much more problematic. Because of the role played in 1968 by the intelligentsia, personalities from the field of science, culture and art, as well as by individuals traditionally representing national elites and possessing authority, it was not possible to ignore the topic.

In contrast to social novels, mainly of the latter half of the 1950s, that were considered to be a model in their time (for example Otčenášek's *Občan Brych* [Citizen Brych]),⁴⁸ the main goal of "normalisation" prose depicting characters based on members of the intelligentsia was not to present the image of their mental development or transformation, but to discredit them by using often the most trivial means. The general popularity of the intellectual protagonists of the Prague Spring offered the use of indirect methods when the literary characters, caricatured needless to say, had various different allusions to actual and real people (the most typical case was Pludek's *Vabank* with its main characters showing Vašek Bobek as Václav Havel, Jan Havran as Pavel Kohout, Sváťa Linda as Milan Kundera, Míša Taub as Gabriel Laub, and the like; Jiří Procházka used a similar approach in his cycle where Professor Holý represented Václav Černý, and so on). From the point of view of "normalisation" prose, the "reviving process" placed these characters, often writers, into the role of moral leaders without justification ("they think they are making a new National Revival").⁴⁹ This was to underline also their dubious personalities and questionable morals, reflected in particular in the field of sexuality, desire for money and fame, and the already mentioned "changing of coats" and instability. The characteristics of the goals that motivated their political ambitions, were again presented in the most trivial and most easily understood manner, mostly to refute

47 NOHEJL, B.: *Velká voda*, p. 175.

48 OTČENÁŠEK, Jan: *Občan Brych* [Citizen Brych]. Československý spisovatel, Praha 1955. The novel was published three times during "normalisation" (1978, 1983, 1986).

49 PECHÁČEK, L.: *Červená rozeta*, p. 128.

the image of the “ideals of the Prague Spring.” The intelligentsia were shown to have the most mundane material interests, which, through influence and power, could be realised on a higher, international level: the trip to Zurich of the main hero-poet from *Červená rozeta*, for example, was to be a cover-up to “take something away and to bring something with him”⁵⁰; in *Vabank*, the writer Míša Taub had “a little business deal here, a little business deal there [...] something put aside in hard currency in his bank account in West Germany or Switzerland, Tuzex coupons in Czechoslovakia.”⁵¹ A popular motif regularly stressed was superiority and arrogance: in *Červená rozeta*, Docent Kramoliš, and the circle of artists he controlled, desired to become the “grey eminence creating history.”⁵² These characters also longed for fame, admiration and most of all for power: their intentions were characterised by an adversary in *Vabank* with the words “one wants to become a minister, the other the director of anything at all, the third a diplomat and the fourth perhaps an artist of merit.”⁵³

The logical reaction to this image of the intelligentsia was rejection. The “corruption” of their moral profile would be renounced by the “healthy layers of society.” “Our intelligentsia should found its own country.”⁵⁴ The image of the “healthy core of the nation” sprang from the older, traditional vision of rural purity, loyalty and stability. This was represented by the now collectivised village and its population, its “own intelligentsia” included: “The rural intelligentsia takes everything seriously and is basically more stable than the intelligentsia of our cities. [...] In the countryside, nothing goes out of fashion that quickly, nothing becomes ordinary that quickly, nothing is denigrated so quickly in the name of some vague possibilities; nothing turns inside out so quickly.”⁵⁵

In the literature under review, the traditional image of the village, therefore, gained the ideologically necessary characteristics: traditionalism presented as distrust towards “novelties,” which gradually passed into being apolitical, thus determining the village as a place where only “real problems” relating to the well-being of the nation were addressed. For this reason, there was no time or willingness to devote to “pseudo-problems” which reach the village only remotely from Prague and, consequently, the population succumbed to a lesser extent to political “temptations.” The Chairwoman of the Agricultural Cooperative Plánice (the Czech abbreviation being JZD Plánice) Anka Šandová from Procházka’s *Hrdelní pře* [Hanging Case] told Major Zeman: “You really fool around in Prague, that is for sure. [...] We here, in the countryside, have no time for your Prague hysteria and craziness [...] we must work hard so that next spring, when you calm down

50 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

51 PLUDEK, A.: *Vabank*, p. 178.

52 PECHÁČEK, L.: *Červená rozeta*, p. 148.

53 PLUDEK, A.: *Vabank*, p. 137.

54 ŘÍHA, B.: *Doktor Meluzin*, p. 42.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[...] there will be something to eat!”⁵⁶ In Malacka’s novel *Pod bílými kopci*⁵⁷ [Under White Hills], the main plot was about the struggle of a village against the intentions of the political leadership of 1968 which wanted to swamp and destroy the large agricultural potential of fertile land and create a dam in its place that would benefit foreign tourists. The defeat of the “reformists” meant not only the rescue and salvation of the village, but also the subsequent development of its economy.

Another layer often depicted in this kind of prose and which gained a new role were young workers or soldiers, working youth in general. Some authors picked members of the young generation as the main heroes in their works; others made use of the methods of a developmental novel when recapitulating the life of middle-aged characters. The majority of them represented maturation and the gradual mental transformation of characters in a wider social, cultural and historical context. The year 1968 meant a “life test” for the young protagonists; their correct political stance implied both their personal and political adulthood in a similar manner as war and liberation had for the older generation. Depicting the working youth brought a guidance model for the identification of the “new generation” with the “new regime” and its political course.

The topic of generational struggles between parents and children, typically a quest on the part of the parents to find where they had gone wrong in the upbringing of their children, served as a means to explain why so many young people joined what was considered to be the wrong side: “What have we neglected while raising our children, how did we cause that they flock like a mindless herd after such profane slogans. How did we rear them if they can be so easily exploited?”⁵⁸ – “However, you forgot to talk every now and then with your own children and now they think you have done too little.”⁵⁹

The portrayal of students (in accordance with their real, from the contemporary point of view, unacceptable, role in 1968) was almost exclusively negative: they were fickle, lacked psychology of any kind, their opinions on their surroundings did not become central topics and their activities were only connected with demonstrations, resolutions and provocations. Their political naivety was mixed with fanaticism, a propensity for violence and a desire for power in the literature under review (“his eyes sparkle because of the feeling of power and [...] manipulation”).⁶⁰

All in all, it was written, the nation, which fell for false illusions despite the relatively high living standards (“all of a sudden, people fall for a strange infatuation; it comes upon them like flu, with their greasy mouths sitting in their soft armchairs in front of the screen they listen with satisfaction to talk about the misery they had fallen into”),⁶¹ was presented as a manipulated crowd who longed for

56 PROCHÁZKA, J.: *Hrdelní pře*, p. 154.

57 MALACKA, Emil: *Pod Bílými kopci* [Under White Hills]. Brno, Blok 1975.

58 KOLÁROVÁ, Jaromíra: *Můj chlapec a já* [My Boy and Me]. Praha, Československý spisovatel 1974, p. 284.

59 NOHEJL, B.: *Velká voda*, p. 152.

60 KOPECKÝ, F.: *Svědění*, p. 67.

61 KOLÁROVÁ, J.: *Můj chlapec a já*, p. 284.

effortless comfort: “I heard that now we would live in that Holland or wherever. People from overcrowded countries will work for us and we will direct the whole thing [...] I have never even dreamt that I would command someone one day.”⁶² On top of that, these masses were presented as controlled by naïve ideas: the hope that money and the desired well-being would be provided by the West. Manipulated members of cooperatives wanted to stop growing economically important crops and were eager to devote themselves to the luxury needs of the West (calves for export, a dam for foreign tourists); others expected to be lent money; all this could be found in the “normalisation” prose dealing with the Prague Spring.

The basic falsity of the highlighted naivety was shown in the unwillingness to see the “real” goals of the West. Older ploys and subjects making use of Western agents who wanted to destroy socialism were no longer convincing and so traditional anti-German sentiments were stirred up instead: Germans represented the West, especially those from the Sudetenland who wanted their Czech cottages and country-houses back, which they still considered to be their own; they intended to return and tried to persuade the Czechs that: “Once the relationship between Deutschland and Tschechei is settled, the grave mistake of expelling the former inhabitants will be erased.”⁶³

From January to August

As the communist “iron logic of history” could not lead to a “crisis development,” it was necessary to present the situation of the year 1968 as the result of a reversal, a departure from the rightful development (the following formulation appeared in one of the novels under scrutiny: “a mysterious spiral clinked to warn those who wanted to turn it back about its relentless functioning”).⁶⁴

The reflection of events portraying the “crisis period” began, as a general rule, with January 1968 (*Vabank* and *Červená rozeta* being the exceptions as they took into account also the fourth congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers of 1967; the 1960s represented a time of political timelessness in “normalisation” prose). With regard to the ordinary addressees and the retrospective confrontation between real experiences and the new interpretations, the transformation of the social atmosphere was looked upon from below or from the lowest (local) level of party leadership (from the point of view of the chairman of the local national committee, the secretary of the district committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia – the KSČ, the chairman of a JZD and so forth). The description of the situation was vague, based on the feelings and moods of society, fuelled by “word of mouth” and naïve surmises. The sketch of actual events was evoked directly or allusively: the January secession of the Central Committee of the KSČ, the crea-

62 KLEVIS, V.: *Toulavý čas*, p. 156.

63 NOHEJL, B.: *Velká voda*, p. 156.

64 KOVANDA, Z.: *Palec na spoušti*, p. 199.

tion of the Club of Politically-Engaged Non-Party Members [Klub angažovaných nestraníků – KAN], the publication of the manifesto “Two Thousand Words,” almost always the functioning of Klub 231; as for actual people, only Alexander Dubček was named as the symbol of the Prague Spring. Protagonists of the reform movement and their sympathisers were labelled as “human faces” or “progressives” in the analysed novels; their opponents, who did not agree with the “crisis development,” were pejoratively labelled as “dinosaurs” (“konzervy” in Czech), “dogmatists” or “commies” (“komouši” in Czech).

The story-building corresponded to the logic of the chosen ideological key. The first sign of crisis, taking the form of some sort of illness that attacked society bit by bit and was gradually becoming part of it (“My nation is not immune to any contagion”),⁶⁵ was confusion and chaos, initially characterised by the uncomprehending questions of the confused public (“As for them, these progressives, what do they actually want?”)⁶⁶; “a strange uncertainty that had tied tongues for many months” appeared.⁶⁷ Elsewhere, “organisers” “mixed everything thoroughly and people do not recognise what is black and what is white,”⁶⁸ and, consequently, they fell into greater and greater uncertainty: “Nothing is in its place and people find themselves in chaos. No one knows what will happen tomorrow, and also no one knows who is who.”⁶⁹ – “One begins to be somewhat lost. I, for instance, sometimes do not understand the newspapers, or television. What do they want?”⁷⁰

Special emphasis was placed on the role of the media which became one of the culprits in spreading “anti-socialist moods” among society and the ensuing sympathies towards the “reviving process”: “People want it – OK, but is everything people want right? They irk and provoke them, start them off – on the radio, television and newspapers.”⁷¹

The image of initial uncertainty then gained a negative coloration and gradually passed into fear (in *Vabank*, the protagonist warned about an artificially created “psychosis of fear,” in *Zádrhel*, one reads that “people know nothing and are afraid of them”),⁷² provocations led to attacks, sedition and slander and escalated into complete hysteria and blind infatuation. Another frequent motif was life in debt after which “a hangover comes when you wake up,”⁷³ false games and fraud: “This foolish, hysterical spring had no end. It rolled over back and forth and reared up as a young wild horse, kicked around senselessly with its hooves, hurt the innocent and sometimes killed cruelly [...] it filled farmers with anxiety as well as those

65 KOLÁROVÁ, J.: *Můj chlapec a já*, p. 284.

66 HRABAL, K.: *Zádrhel*, p. 73.

67 KOVANDA, Z.: *Palec na spoušti*, p. 47.

68 PLUDEK, A.: *Vabank*, p. 183.

69 HRABAL, K.: *Zádrhel*, p. 118.

70 MALACKA, E.: *Pod Bílými kopci*, p. 38.

71 KOPECKÝ, F.: *Svědění*, p. 56.

72 HRABAL, K.: *Zádrhel*, p. 133.

73 PROCHÁZKA, J.: *Lišky mění srst*, p. 31.

who were able to imagine where all this could lead to.”⁷⁴ Authors also used other metaphors, not only the “wild horse,” to present the ongoing events: In Kostrhun’s *Svatba ve vypůjčených šatech* [A Wedding in Borrowed Clothes], the metaphor of a wedding was used. In this case, drunken wedding guests raped the bride; in addition, the image of a fallen house for which for “ten years we worked hard and saved money, five years we lived there and spent money, five months we tinkered around its bases and in five seconds, everything fell down.”⁷⁵ The very titles of the novels were metaphorical: *Vabank* [Gamble], *Velká voda* [High Water], *Zádrhel* [Bottlenecks], *Hrdelní pře* [Hanging Case], *Přezrálé léto* [Override Summer], *Svatba ve vypůjčených šatech* [A Wedding in Borrowed Clothes], *Palec na spoušti* [Thumb on the Trigger]; their protagonists were branded as Stagehands [*Kulisáci*], Clowns [*Klauni*], Foxes Changing Their Fur [*Lišky mění srst*].

The stories reached the critical point of escalation where traditional and time-tested patterns that highlight the polarisation between good and evil were used. Confusion, chaos, the atmosphere of fear, hysteria and demagoguery even led to real danger for those who did not agree with the political developments and were loyal to the Marxist line of the Communist Party. Positive characters suffered and were persecuted for their opinions. The motif of the persecution of “loyal Communists” and their “hunting” was put in the context of a similar pursuit in the pre-February period and especially during the Second World War; this was sometimes emphasised by using the same oppressor in both periods, only now the oppressor supported the “reviving process.” The persecution likewise formed a parallel with the first post-February years: in the same way Communists then had to face members of the “reactionary strata,” agents or, in contrast, over-zealous Communists. It is a paradox that the forms of persecution would be known to the reader from the way the Communist Party itself enforced its will.

Little by little, in the prose under scrutiny, “loyal” Communists were removed from their posts or dismissed from employment. This “hunting,” however, had much more insidious forms as even children and other relatives were subjected to insults (the daughter of Major Zeman, for instance, was ridiculed by her classmates and was accused of her father’s alleged crimes; in *Vabank*, students did not want to be taught by the wife of a dogmatic Communist). Roles were being reversed even in the depiction of the coercive means the “progressives” used in 1968 to obtain consent for their politics, to obtain signatures on resolutions and proclamations or to force people to join the newly-established organisations against their will: “I had to sign it. [...] Otherwise they would kick me out from state service once their freedom took place,” the main hero from Nohejl’s *Velká voda* commented on such practices.⁷⁶ The heroine of one such novel even had to lock herself in the toilet

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁷⁵ KOSTRHUN, Jan: *Svatba ve vypůjčených šatech* [A Wedding in Borrowed Clothes]. Praha, Československý spisovatel 1989, p. 78.

⁷⁶ NOHEJL, B.: *Velká voda*, p. 168.

when she was chased while being forced to sign “Two Thousand Words.”⁷⁷ Cases with fatal consequences were to be a tragic memento: Colonel Kalina of the novel *Hrdelní pře* died in 1968 because “his own people [...] thrust a dagger into his heart, wickedly from the back – and his heart did not make it.”⁷⁸ In another book, “a young man poisoned himself with gas. He left a letter for his mother stating that he could not stand the things that were being said and written about his father.”⁷⁹

The summer of 1968 represented the point of escalation in the plots and an open crisis: protagonists had to face physical violence and delinquency, while the political and social development possessed features of a burgeoning civil war. The function of these motifs was to give a certain shape to the term counterrevolution, enforced by the official “normalisation” propaganda, for which it was not possible to find a parallel in the national historical development. The “counterrevolution” in Hungary in 1956 served as a certain prototype: in *Zádrhel*, a novel where the situation possessed the most visible signs of a civil war as it progressed into open fighting, the main character was a witness to how “honest Communists are being kicked out and face threats. They are even being beaten up in the streets as in the old days. If this goes on, they will be hanging on lamp-posts soon as happened in Hungary.”⁸⁰ The danger of open fighting was shown by depictions of brawls, blood, and stones hurled at windows. The situation was thus described in *Palec na spoušti*: “And rumours about lists of Communists with a lamp-post marked next to their names – and rumours about secret weapons were perhaps more true than anyone was ready to believe. War? Counterrevolution left its hiding places and moved into open attack!”⁸¹ Indeed, these two novels, the most engaged and most belligerent, opened space for another motif that the other books tried to avoid: pleading for help to the Soviet Union.

Occupation? Liberation!

Naturally, the most delicate issue was the image of the August occupation. Most authors rather evaded it – either by placing the beginning of the plot after it or, alternatively, finishing right before it was supposed to take place. Most of the potential readers reacted to these historical events emotionally and in a completely different way from the heroes of the prose under scrutiny. If authors decided to include the occupation in their work, the occupation being in most cases absolutely rejected in the minds of the nation, they had to rethink it entirely: the sketched storyline heading towards collision was, therefore, necessary to show it as an unravelling, as a happy (and permanent) solution to the crisis situation.

77 PLUDEK, A.: *Vabank*, p. 242.

78 PROCHÁZKA, J.: *Hrdelní pře*, p. 142.

79 *Ibid.*.

80 HRABAL, K.: *Zádrhel*, p. 178.

81 KOVANDA, Z.: *Palec na spoušti*, p. 197.

Part of the strongly engaged prose⁸² that understood the events of 1968 as counterrevolution and the beginning of a civil war and the occupation as “international help” looked for support in the document that became the norm for exposing these events – in the *Lessons from the Crisis Development in the Party and Society after the 13th Congress of the KSC* which was adopted by the 14th Congress of Czechoslovak Communists in 1971. In general, the authors in question fictionalised its theses: “In such a situation it was necessary to decide whether to wait for the counterrevolution to stir internecine struggles in which thousands of people would perish and only then provide international help, or act in time and prevent the bloody tragedy even at the price of not being understood initially at home as well as across the border. The entry of allied forces into Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 prevented such bloodshed and was, therefore, necessary and the only right solution.”⁸³

For those protagonists who were endangered by the existing “crisis development,” the entry of the “fraternal armies” meant a certain kind of rescue and relief expressed, among other things, in the fact that once they had become familiar with the situation, they engaged in other activities light-heartedly. The wife of the main character in the novel *Svědění* went to bed peacefully because “now everything will be alright”⁸⁴; the population of the village Hrázná from the novel *Pod Bílými kopci* calmly continued to fish and were looking forward to chatting with Soviet soldiers. As a token of gratitude to the soldiers who saved the situation, the motif of welcome and communication between the local population and the “liberators” likewise appeared: “Some went to drive them out – I go to welcome them.”⁸⁵ In the novel *Zádrhel*, young workers happily showed the soldiers the way to the city: “[...] we laugh [...] It is fantastic you came.”⁸⁶ The mother of the main character baked cakes (Czech *buchty*) for them and they, in return, came to visit them at home.

Problematic information, such as casualties or deaths, was, of course, omitted; soldiers with their tanks were to represent a calm waiting power. If a dramatic situation occurred and meant victims, then guilt was on the part of the Czechs – if possible characters who had been actively engaged in the “reviving process” whose main value in life was freedom understood in anarchic terms (in *Zádrhel*, a student shot and wounded his girlfriend; in *Palec na spoušti*, the main hero-Communist was shot and wounded by a drunk who “wanted to live in his own way”).⁸⁷ Remarks

82 HRABAL, Karel: *Zádrhel* [Bottlenecks]. Práce, Praha 1982. KOPECKÝ, František: *Svědění* [Conscience]. Růže, České Budějovice 1973. KOVANDA, Zbyněk: *Palec na spoušti* [Thumb on the Trigger]. Plzeň, Západočeské nakladatelství 1975. MALACKA, Emil: *Pod bílými kopci* [Under White Hills]. Brno, Blok 1975. PODLAHA, František: *Rozcestí* [Crossroads]. České Budějovice, Růže 1972. SKORUNKA, František: *Srpnové pastorále* [August Pastorate]. In: *Údolí věčných návratů* [Valley of Eternal Returns]. České Budějovice, Růže 1976.

83 *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ*. Praha, Svoboda 1988, p. 31.

84 KOPECKÝ, F.: *Svědění*, p. 75.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

86 HRABAL, K.: *Zádrhel*, p. 284.

87 KOVANDA, Z.: *Palec na spoušti*, p. 199.

about the fighting in Prague appeared only exceptionally (more precisely, only in *Palec na spoušti*, one learnt about “ridiculous defenders of the radio” who barricaded themselves in and insisted on “entering history regardless of the cost”),⁸⁸ in fact, there were more tendencies to ignore the events all together.

Explaining deeper motivations for a positive welcome for Soviet soldiers could be found in retrospective passages in which the protagonists analogically compared the situation with the liberation that took place in 1945. This was done in the form of personal memories of Soviet soldiers presented as bringing peace, happiness and new life. In *Palec na spoušti*, the soldier Zakir Izmailov represented such a symbol of help and liberation, he was the metonymical personification of the whole Soviet Army: “Zakir Izmailov came in time!”⁸⁹ Elsewhere characters looked forward to their common memories of liberation: “Damn, we certainly can think back!”⁹⁰ František Kopecký confronted the picture of Soviet soldiers with German tanks in 1939 in order to refute the comparison with occupation: “These people do not know what occupation is at all!”⁹¹

What Next? Options and Starting Points

After solving the crisis, it was necessary to offer indicative solutions for the ensuing life of the protagonists. Prose that did not finish with August 1968 therefore comprised also the next phase of the development of the socialist state and society, so-called “normalisation” or the consolidation of the state of affairs. In this phase, Communists who had experienced “liquidation” during the Prague Spring period returned to their posts and functions. Because of the calming of the atmosphere and the end of public activities, families were united again, having been divided because of different opinions about the political situation and by the dispute about the time devoted to public engagement at the expense of the family; the birth or conception of a child was sometimes used as a symbolic image of the new life to come. In general, the “new era” was presented as a time of stabilisation and harmonisation of conditions.

In novels in which the main protagonists were young people, their “life exam” was confirmed by their new, and in contrast to their previous experiences now solid and mature relationships (concluded sometimes by marriage). Political maturity was accompanied by their activities in the local Socialist Union of Youth (SSM) representing identification with the new regime.

Whereas new doors opened to positive characters who had an optimistic perspective, negative characters, i.e. those who had engaged in the reform movement, either emigrated to the West or were forgotten. A detailed description of a “typi-

88 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

90 MALACKA, E.: *Pod Bílými kopci*, p. 150.

91 *Ibid.*

cal” dissent group was offered in Procházka’s *Lišky mění srst*: the representatives of artists and intelligentsia who did not adapt to the new regime and still stood in opposition lost their former jobs and now worked manually – however, only in those professions where they could get hold of money and profit from “illegal dealings.” They became gas station assistants, taxi drivers or barmaids who were connected with crime and *forex* scams.

In the case of the literary depiction of emigrants and their motivation to leave their homeland, “normalisation” fiction made use of an ideologically suitable model used in prose dealing with the February takeover and could, therefore, stick to communist “best practice.” The motivations of the protagonists, it was shown, always stemmed from their desire to have better material conditions and words about freedom served as a “cover”; occasionally, the motif of running away from one’s conscience or family problems was used. The decision of the protagonists to emigrate was accompanied by naïve expectations of an easy life and grandiose plans that, however, had nothing to do with the actual results: the emigrants could gain employment and livelihood only as unskilled labour or even ended up in prison, while women often had to work as strippers or prostitutes; they came back only exceptionally and got a second chance. The bad end for emigrants was the logical outcome of their previous attempts to gain money or power; such people were often, from the class point of view, determined on “treason” as former members of the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia.

The subject of the moral and political awareness of initially undecided characters thinking about emigration also fits the older pattern. The decision to stay in their homeland was not challenged even by the “test” that came in the form of the emigration of one of their closest family relatives, husband or wife: the disagreement on the question of emigration disqualified the relationship and actually determined its end. Refusing emigration, and an unpromising relationship, provided space for a new, better relationship for the positive characters. Říha’s *Doktor Meluzin* [Doctor Meluzin] was the most prominent example in this category. The main topic was the start of a new life for a Prague senior medical consultant, now a general practitioner in the country. It was here that he broke away from the problematic relationship with his wife, who had emigrated, and found a lady with whom he took care of a child and enjoyed real human happiness.

The analysis of the literature under review shows that the values praised were not only the family relations highlighted above and active participation in “normalisation” political life (which automatically included the rejection of the Prague Spring “fraud”), but also political and civil stability, loyalty and firmness. As well as traditionally “loyal” Communists, most often pre-war members of the Communist Party of working-class origin, the changed conditions and new experiences found shape also in non-traditional heroes, likewise praised by the regime, such as the main positive character in Karel Houba’s *Postel s nebesy*.

The main protagonist, Pavel Daneš, came from a petty bourgeois family and, even though he was not a party member, he did not succumb to political opportunism and did not engage in the “reviving process.” In contrast, the main negative character,

represented in the form of his wife, had been a long-time member of the party, was of a working-class background and eventually emigrated from the country. This turn from typical patterns of class friends and enemies even caught the interest of Josef Škvorecký, for instance, who characterised Houba's hero as "a positive hero of Socialist Realism in its third development phase," praised by the regime as a "hardworking, law-abiding citizen of the socialist state who keeps his opinions to himself"; he continued with his description by saying Daneš was a citizen "endowed with common sense [...] patiently bearing injustice and bullying, surviving all the social somersaults [...] and staying permanently at home, in Czechoslovakia."⁹² The fact that the "normalisation" phase of "Socialist Realism" had words of praise not only for party members but for all other loyal citizens who decided to stand on the right side, was indirectly formulated in a book written by Bohumil Říha, in a letter written by the main hero, a non-party member, who characterised himself as a "lonely walker": "Perhaps you think that loyalty is only about nodding your head and simple agreement. Yet, my loyalty is something completely opposite. It includes the recognition of socialism as the future of the world, but it is also a two-sided struggle: against powers that pull us away from socialism and, at the same time, fight against the hidden force of habit. It does not change it that sometimes I did not realise this and did not always act according to it."⁹³

One of the protagonists in the novel *Svědění* put it well when he spoke of the changing status of the individual in a state where belief in communist ideals and in a vision of a better future faded, where personal zeal was not required anymore and where simple loyalty to the ruling circles was sufficient. Without intending it, he expressed the essence of the new stage of socialist Czechoslovakia that followed the events of the so-called Prague Spring and the Soviet occupation of 1968: "It is not about love or hatred today. It is about sense – there is place for sense here."⁹⁴

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92 ŠKVORECKÝ, J.: Několik poznámek k psychopatologii současné české prózy, p. 284.

93 ŘÍHA, B.: *Doktor Meluzin*, p. 111.

94 KOPECKÝ, F.: *Svědění*, p. 110.

Political Games with the “Unfinished Revolution”

*Settling Accounts with Communism in the Times of the
Civic Forum and after its Disintegration (1989–1992)*¹

Jiří Suk

A Historical Compromise

A huge wave of demonstrations swept across Czechoslovakia in November and December 1989, bringing down the rule of the country's Communist Party (KSČ). Yet, what on the outside looked like a revolution lacked an internal revolutionary charge. The opposition had been a marginal phenomenon in terms of political clout prior to November 1989; unable and unwilling to settle accounts with the regime, the dissidents had simply been asking for dialogue on reform, which, of course, the regime had been rejecting. What had been a passive society, for two generations bogged down in the police-bureaucratic reality of the socialist state, only rose in revolt belatedly, under the irresistible influence of the revolutionary events in neighbouring countries which culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989. The ruling Communists realised too late that their regime was doomed, and all they could do was to slip out from under their hammer-and-sickle banners. In the anti-totalitarian explosion after 17 November, everyone – the regime, the opposition and society – was suddenly faced with the unavoidable fact that a whole epoch was over.

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The phase of events that fitted the parameters of a revolution was brief, lasting only to the end of 1989. The Federal Parliament unanimously chose dissident Václav Havel as President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on 29 December. The new president was elected by a body in which communist MPs were in an absolute majority. There is one tantalising hint in the records that this vote may have been preceded by an explicitly formulated political agreement: if the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia elected its former “class enemy” as head of state, it would be recognised without reservations as a legal part of the democratic political system.²

2 The hypothesis is based on evidence surviving in one tape-recording, which has yet to be supplemented by other historical records. I quote it *in extenso*. On 22 December 1989, at a preparatory meeting of the leaders of the Civic Forum and the Public against Violence, which preceded the next round of roundtable negotiations between the political parties, the Chairman of the Civic Forum Coordination Centre Petr Pithart said: “A common candidate for President of the Republic will be agreed on. In this context, the question may arise of something for which no date and time has yet been arranged. [The Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party] Mohorita, at the last meeting [roundtable meeting on 13 December 1989], characterised it as a mandate. This probably means that if we are to agree on a joint candidate, we want certain guarantees from him, which will never be made public, but will be written down, formulated, and we will confirm them by some sort of a handshake, to ensure this is what will really happen. Maybe he will drop the idea, but if he does not, then Jaroslav Šabata, a member of our delegation, is ready to formulate it on the spot, because he has spoken about it with [the General Secretary of the CP Central Committee] Urbánek. Urbánek expressed certain fears that the Communist Party has for itself, for its members. And these are fears that, of course, Vašek [Havel] is willing to allay. To guarantee, in a few sentences, they are in no danger. I doubt that the Socialists or Lidovci [Christian Democrats] would want such a thing, but we have decided not to prepare this text in advance. If they want it, we shall formulate it on the spot.” In: SUK, Jiří (ed.): *Občanské fórum: Listopad–prosinec 1989* [The Civic Forum: November–December 1989], Vol. 2: *Dokumenty* [Documents]. Praha – Brno, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR – Doplňěk 1998, p. 258. Twenty years later, Petr Pithart did not recall his words from 22 December 1989, but he does not deny them either: “What rules out any actual (secret, because sensitive) agreement is this: Mohorita talked about a ‘mandate’ at the roundtable, not in the lobby. I also talked about it at the OF [Civic Forum] and VPN [Public against Violence] meeting. What could he have meant by mandate? Probably this: If you want to elect a president, and we are going to have a chance of electing him, then will we have a mandate, mandates? Will we be in the Federal Parliament at all? There are no further reports or hints of negotiations about ‘guarantees’; Čalfa arranged it. Havel did not, in my view, have to ‘allay fears.’ I think that ‘we will not prepare the text in advance,’ means that we did not have anything agreed on and were probably waiting to see what the other side would suggest. But they did not bring it up.” (These comments are taken from Pithart’s written notes from the beginning of April 2009 prepared for the text of this article.) By the words “Čalfa arranged it,” Pithart was alluding to the activities of the Federal Prime Minister Marián Čalfa, who between 15 and 19 December managed to get the communist MPs to vote for Václav Havel as president by lobbying in the Federal Parliament. His successful efforts were preceded by an agreement between Čalfa and Havel on 15 December on a coordinated approach in getting Havel’s candidacy through. It is probable that Čalfa promised the communist MPs that if they elected Havel president, they would remain in the Federal Parliament up to the parliamentary elections of June 1990. At a joint meeting of both houses of the legislature on 19 December, members of the Communist (KSC) Club of MPs publically and unanimously supported

Whether or not such an agreement was actually made, this is indeed what happened: the law on political parties of 23 January 1990 enabled the Communist Party to slip through into the new conditions intact.

The policy of compromise was grounded in the adoption of the constitutional order of the “socialist state.” Continuity was supposed to provide a bridge to a state based on law and democracy. Only the cornerstone of totalitarian rule (the leading role of the KSČ in society and the political system of the National Front) was removed from the existing socialist constitution of 1960 supplemented by the law on the Czechoslovak Federation of 1968. It was to be left to parliament to draw up a new constitutional charter following free elections. The possibility of government by presidential decrees of a revolutionary legislative directorate was not considered. Thus, as early as the end of January and beginning of February 1990 – on the basis of roundtable agreements – *parliamentary democracy* was formally restored in Czechoslovakia. The composition of the existing legislative bodies (the Federal Parliament, Czech National Parliament and Slovak National Parliament) was partially changed by the co-optation of deputies from the ranks of the Civic Forum (OF) and the Public against Violence. A similar co-optation process took place in all district national committees in the country in early March. The Communists were giving up their majority everywhere, but they retained a very strong representation in the governments, parliaments and national committees. The decision on whether they would remain or depart from national and local politics was left to citizens in the coming parliamentary elections in June 1990 and the local elections in November 1990.

* * *

Havel’s candidacy. Did they change their view because Čalfa had been threatening them (as he claimed to historians in 1994), or because he had promised them political survival up to the elections? In my view, the latter is more plausible: the prospect of survival to the end of their mandate may have been the reason why at the roundtable the Communists did not demand those “guarantees that there is no danger to them” on 22 December that had been requested by Vasil Mohorita at the preceding roundtable talks of 13 December. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that at the next sitting of the two houses on 23 January 1990, the communist deputies refused to vote for a law on co-optations that would have led to most of them being dismissed and replaced by OF and VPN activists. Čalfa’s Federal Government also resisted the co-optation law on the formal grounds that it would be a great disgrace to Czechoslovakia abroad. This hypothesis is also supported by a comment made by Václav Havel immediately after his meeting with Čalfa on 15 December, to the effect that the Federal Parliament would remain in its existing composition up to the elections and would obediently vote for all the laws submitted to it (see SUK, Jiří: K prosazení kandidatury Václava Havla na úřad prezidenta v prosinci 1989: Dokumenty a svědectví [On the Pushing Through of the Candidacy of Václav Havel to the Office of President in December 1989: Documents and Testimony]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 6, No. 2–3 (1999), pp. 346–369). Nonetheless, in my view, the hypothesis that in exchange for supporting Havel’s candidacy the Communists extracted a promise of the unreserved inclusion of their party in the new pluralist democratic political spectrum cannot be ruled out and is still in play.

Altogether, something previously unthinkable had happened: the fall of communism in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and other countries (with the exception of Romania) had cost no lives. The much feared eastern imperium had died a quick and painless death. This unexpected, breath-taking change seemed like an earthquake without repercussions, the triumph of freedom without violence. There was talk of an end to the eternal cycle of revolution and counter-revolution, the breaking of the chain of violence and revenge for violence. The end of the imperium changed not only Poles, Hungarians, Germans, Bulgarians, Romanians, Czechs and Slovaks, but it was believed it would change the whole world. The Czechoslovak President Václav Havel declared that the Central European and East European nations, with their longer and more comprehensive experience with totalitarian regimes than the Western nations, could mediate it to the world as a lesson and a memento.

“We Are Not Like Them!”

Many political prisoners of the 1950s, who had stood up to the totalitarian regime in the name of a free society and paid for it with many years of harsh imprisonment, inevitably regarded the compromise as a cruel joke of history. The writer Karel Pecka, for instance, was one of them. He believed: “At the moment when Havel had absolute power and when parliament was full of Communists ready to vote for their own hanging, he started using slogans like ‘We Are Not Like Them,’ ‘Truth and Love Will Prevail over Lies and Hatred,’ and similar mottos that might be suitable for cookbooks. Only this is not politics; you cannot do politics by evangelisation. That was why things turned out as they did. But it would have been enough to make the Communist Party illegal, which would have been a simple legal procedure because every member of the Communist Party must have agreed with the invasion by the armies of the Warsaw Pact in sixty-eight, and by doing so committed high treason. And after that – not blood and hangings, but to strip them of money, all their operating and media resources, and that is the job done, start again from scratch.”³

Who would take the blame for the seizure of power in February 1948, for the Bolshevik terror and judicial crimes, for the crushing of the democratic movement after August 1968, for the next wave of repression and suppression of human rights and civil liberties in the 1960s and 1970s? This question formed no part of the strategic thinking of the Civic Forum and the Public against Violence, and hence was not on the political agenda of the roundtable. Not that it was explicitly rejected; it was simply not publicly raised (the Civic Forum merely demanded that a few leading communist functionaries symbolising the universal bankruptcy of the era of “normalisation” leave public life). The unexpectedly massive public participation in street demonstrations entirely obscured this lacuna – the crowds on the squares

3 LUKÉŠ, Jan: *Hry doopravdy: Rozhovor s Karlem Peckou* [Plays for Real: An interview with Karel Pecka]. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka 1998, p. 236.

identified with the carnival, sometimes even variety-show style of the meetings, which did not then evolve into an arena for competition between revolutionary fractions ratcheting up their demands. In its time the slogan “We Are Not Like Them” was interpreted as expressing the generosity of the outright winner to the outright defeated and was embodied in the appeal to individual Communists and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as a whole: let only the compromised leave public life, while let the others, who form the majority, accept the new order and remain in their positions.⁴

The historic compromise was not simply a way out of an unexpected revolution that had caught everyone unaware; its roots went deeper into the past. The slogan “We Are Not Like Them” had already been encoded in the dissidents’ ideas of the *parallel polis* and *the power of the powerless* developed in the 1970s and 1980s. The dissident movement was based primarily on ethical and aesthetic values. It campaigned for respect for and cultivation of human and civil rights, and this could only be through dialogue. The leading Chartists had been offering a policy of dialogue even up to in the very last moments of the communist era, claiming that they might be the last generation of opposition willing to negotiate with the compromised regime. It is therefore no wonder that the Civic Forum made negotiations its strategy. From its founding on 19 November 1989, its leader Václav Havel “forged a path on grounds of a very conscious principle to what was then called the *Velvet Revolution* [...] the path of reconciliation, an attempt to include everyone so as to prevent excesses.”⁵

We should not forget the power context. Although the influence of the opposition had been rising before November 1989, it had remained limited. The regime, armed to its teeth, had defended its positions throughout 1989, including very harsh suppression of the demonstration on 17 November. It had been unable to back down, for that would have been its end. Nor had anything been forcing it to back down. There had been no appeals from any quarters for its overthrow by a frontal attack. Society at large was as it were under a paralysing spell; for so long unable to gather internal forces for a decisive collective action, it had for just as long

4 “The KSČ bears the responsibility for the general spiritual, moral, political and economic decline of our country. We therefore challenge it to place its best people at its head and help us to convert this country from totalitarianism into democracy,” (from Václav Havel’s speech on Wenceslas Square on 10 December 1989). In: SUK, Jiří (ed.): *Občanské fórum*, Vol. 2, p. 245. “The one million and seven hundred thousand Communists are not some biological or moral species different from the rest of us. Most of them have had to keep their mouths shut for twenty years like all of us and many of them had done – if with difficulties – many good things,” (from Václav Havel’s speech on 16 December 1989 on Czechoslovak TV. In: *Ibid.*, p. 203).

5 Quotes in a discussion bringing together historians Václav Kofroň, Martin Nodl, Jiří Suk and Pavel Zeman with the screenwriter and advisor to Havel, Jiří Křížan, on 3 November 1994 (*Archiv Ústavu pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR* [Archive of the Institute for Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic] (hereafter *A ÚSD*), Collection of Themed Discussions on the Events at the Turn of the Years 1989/1990, Tape Recording Transcript, p. 10).

experienced no powerful impulse from the outside. The student demonstration of 17 November 1989 was permeated by the will to non-violence, and this was then quite deliberately turned into a kind of a Gandhi-esque weapon against armed power. This fundamental gesture was carried forward in the subsequent days and merged with the Chartist message of dialogue (the mass democratic movement in Slovakia, the equivalent of the Civic Forum, even called itself the Public against Violence). In just a few days a massive political movement full of unique potential was created, but in the last weeks of the revolutionary year, what it generated was no more than what had been impressed on it by the spontaneously accepted student and dissident elite. At this point, it was impossible for the gesture of peaceful dialogue to be transformed into politics of retribution, and nobody was demanding that this happened.

Rank-and-file Communists were joining the “Velvet Revolution” from the outset. On 25 November 1989, for example, the well-known actor Ilja Prachař gave one of the speeches to the crowds on Letná Pláň, where in the name of the Vinohrady Theatre’s KSČ organisation he condemned the party leadership’s policy and declared that the Communist Party had lost its leading role in society for good. He reaped massive applause. Indeed, gestures like this were the order of the day. From the beginning, it was clear that the one million seven hundred-thousand members of the KSČ were no mass army resolved to defend the “achievements of socialism” but a disintegrating structure with many fault lines. The “carnival of revolution” was a mass celebration of the departure of communism from the stage of history and many Communists celebrated it as well.

The university students who had initiated the civil disturbances often came from communist families. Almost all had been organised in the Socialist Union of Youth (SSM), and some of the tribunes of the revolution were among its active functionaries. Mass resignation from official organisations after 17 November was often ritualised. At Charles University’s Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, for instance, students could tear up their SSM membership cards and throw them into a chest by the entrance in contemptuous rejection of forced uniformity. It was a brief process during which no demand for any kind of retribution or vigorous settling of accounts appeared on the agenda. The carnival euphoria of millions of people, who were all steeped in the everyday practices of what was known as “real existing socialism,” temporarily masked the range of conflicting historical memories and interpretations that – one after the other and in very quick succession – started to emerge at the beginning of 1990. The short period of “national reconciliation” then gave way to a period of long-drawn-out conflicts and disputes arising from the unresolved past.

*Post-Communist Anti-Communism
(Up to the Parliamentary Elections in June 1990)*

The fall of the Soviet imperium in 1989 opened space for anti-communism as an ideological starting-point and political programme. In 1990, a fundamental distancing from the forty years of “real existing socialism” became an automatic part of public debate and polemic and of the programme of most parties and movements. What had been nowhere to be seen or heard a few weeks before was suddenly visible and audible everywhere. On 1 January 1990, Czech society found itself on the threshold of a great discursive adventure, at the start of the whole process of post-communist reflection on the past. Work commenced on re-writing the history that had been written by the Communists in the matrix of class and class struggle. Indeed, a surprisingly great number of experts felt called to the task.

The birth of post-communist anti-communism as a political, social and cultural phenomenon is the primary theme of the presented article. This anti-communism found many and variously positioned and motivated spokespeople and a great variety of written, oral and visual expressions in the years 1990–1992. Its champions fiercely rejected the reality of *historical compromise* and demanded *historical justice*. As if history was just. Their political premise may be put briefly: if we do not first grasp the nettle of the KSČ, its exponents, structures and the residue of its government, our democratic transformation will be a failure. They saw due satisfaction as a matter of outlawing the Communist Party, the prosecution of traitors and criminals before the courts, the departure of all communist notables from public life and the publication of the names of employees and agents of the State Security.

This was the basic agenda of the former political prisoners who had founded a club entitled Klub 231 in 1968, and revived its forcibly interrupted campaign by establishing the Confederation of Political Prisoners (KPV) in 1989. Not that active anti-communism remained confined to people with experience of the communist prison camps. In the liberated society, they were joined by several smaller parties, organisations and groups. These defined themselves in opposition to two political facts: the legal existence of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) as heir to the pre-November KSČ and the policy of compromise represented by the most prominent leaders of the Civic Forum, such as Václav Havel, Petr Pithart, Petr Kučera, Ivan Fišera, Jan Urban, Pavel Rychetský and others. As has been noted, the new elite did not make the question of legal satisfaction for the crimes of the fallen regime part of its political programme. Regarding “national understanding,” and the “continuity of power” as the greater gain, they did not want to make Czechoslovakia a land of “two kinds of people,” and split the national community into “us” and “them.”

* * *

When did the carnival atmosphere of compromise change into permanent mobilisation and political struggle over the past? In fact, it happened very soon. As early

as in January 1990, all kinds of strategies of resistance and settling accounts with the fallen regime were brewing – in factories, offices, local elected bodies and committees throughout the country. This rising wave was observed with unease in the Prague Civic Forum Coordination Centre (KC OF). On 19 January 1990, the leader of the Czech Democratic Movement (OH) Petr Pithart appealed on television to the district and work civic forums to refrain from using revolutionary methods to change personnel in local governments and the management of concerns. He insisted that the conduct of the OF “must in no way resemble the rampaging of the committees of the National Front after February 1948.”⁶ Changes were supposed to be made peacefully on the basis of roundtable agreements. The panoramic view from above differed in many respects from the many dramatic situations crystallising at the bottom, however, and Pithart’s appeal met with a mixed response. Actually, many local forums rejected it. “We at the bottom need to get a move on,” this was the kind of objection made by the dissatisfied delegates at the OF assemblies.

The policy of constitutional consensus was tested by stormy events that took place in Brno in February and March 1990. The local civic forum, led by the former Communist and later Charter 77 signatory and political prisoner Jaroslav Šabata, decided to leave the Mayor of Brno, Josef Pernica (KSČ), in place, since it had failed to find another suitable candidate. This caused a wave of protest from much of the Brno public and from several forums represented by another Charter 77 signatory and political prisoner, Petr Cibulka. The Brno Civic Forum was not taken over by Cibulka’s radicals, who split from it and founded their own organisational and information structures. Yet, they still acted as an accelerator in the spontaneous process of resistance to the politics of compromise.

On 1 March 1990, the enterprising Civic Forum of the Prague ČKD-Polovodiče [semiconductors] Plant called on the Communist Party to give up its property to the state by the end of the month and requested that the Federal Parliament passed a suitable law on the matter. The challenge was supported by all forums and even the previously restrained OF Coordination Centre. The Communists fought back, consistently defending themselves by pointing out that the law on political parties of 23 January 1990 contained no reservations with regard to KSČ’s activities, and so provided no grounds for state property claims against it either. They branded calls for what they termed “confiscation” of “legally” acquired property as an attempt to “liquidate” a democratic political party. Nonetheless, the government and parliaments started to consider the question of the Communist Party’s real estate and other assets, but in no way as a priority – the relevant laws were not passed until November 1990 and the long wrangles over the issue were not resolved until the year 2000. In the context of topic under scrutiny, it is interesting to note that the Civic Forum of ČKD-Polovodiče regarded the property settlement as its single

6 See SUK, Jiří: *Labyrintem revoluce: Aktéři, zápletky a křižovatky jedné politické krize (Od listopadu 1989 do června 1990)* [Through the Labyrinth of Revolution; Actors, Plots and Crossroads of One Political Crisis (From November 1989 to June 1990)]. Praha, Prostor 2003, p. 383.

key demand against the Communist Party in March 1990, for, at this point, it was still working on the principle of the policy of compromise. A great majority of civic forums, including this enterprising work forum, had moved on to the question of making the KSČ illegal by April of the same year.

On 17 April 1990, a prosecutor of the City of Prague, Tomáš Sokol (OF), announced that he would now be reviewing the activities of the KSČ in Prague with regard to their possible breach of the criminal law against supporting and promoting fascism and similar movements menacing freedom and democracy as defined in the relevant passages of the country’s Criminal Code. He justified this move by a quite extensive and impressive analysis in which he made comparisons between Nazi and communist totalitarian ideology and practice. The Communists once again reacted fiercely, and walked out of a meeting of the Federal Parliament in protest. Since they still had a very strong representation in the highest legislative body, their obstructionism seriously endangered the crucial legislative programmes already underway. Important laws could not be passed without them and a constitutional crisis loomed. The leaders of the KC OF declared that the attempt to outlaw the KSČ was a purely private initiative on the part of Sokol, and the Club of Parliamentary Deputies of the Civic Forum would not support it. This was not enough for the communist deputies, who only consented to return to the debating chamber after getting a promise from the General Prosecutor of the Czech Republic Pavel Rychetský (OF) that he would initiate disciplinary proceedings against his subordinate Sokol. A constitutional crisis was thus avoided, but at the price of a crisis inside the democratic movement. At the OF assembly, that took place on 21 April, all the regional forums unanimously backed Tomáš Sokol. The leaders of the movement had lost another piece of “revolutionary” legitimacy.⁷

As the elections approached, organised public manifestations of anti-communism gathered momentum with one public event inspiring the next. On 3 May, there was a “Day against Totalitarianism,” and a few days later, on 12 May, the Confederation of Political Prisoners together with the Club of Politically-Engaged Non-Party Members [Klub angažovaných nestraníků – KAN] and the Movement for Civic Freedom held a demonstration entitled “The Truth about the KSČ.” Both events attracted several thousand people. Five days later, the four “historic democratic parties,” i.e. the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, the Czechoslovak People’s Party, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party and the Democratic Party – published a declaration calling for the KSČ to be outlawed. However, voters turned a deaf ear to this showy election gesture. Perhaps this was the case because they could still remember the close cooperation, if not collaboration, of most of these parties with the Communists. Civic Forum ČKD-Polovodiče caught its second anti-communist wind and organised a meeting at the Exhibition Centre in Prague entitled “What to do next about the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia” on 19 May at which the General

7 The following chapter is devoted to the topic: “Komunistická strana – koaliční partner, nebo zločinná organizace?” [“The Communist Party – A Coalition Partner or a Criminal Organisation”]. In: *Labyrintem revoluce* (pp. 380–400).

Prosecutor of the Czech Republic (most probably in order to restore his reputation tarnished in the dispute with the city prosecutor Sokol), declared that high communist functionaries had enriched themselves by breaking the law and would be subject to court action. The meetings failed to induce responsible politicians to change their compromise course, but contributed to the further polarisation of the democratic movement.

In parallel with these movements the first major political crisis was erupting. It concerned the plan for the management of the Federal Ministry of Interior. The Interior Minister, Richard Sacher (ČSL – the Czechoslovak People's Party), opted for continuity of personnel, whereas the Civic Forum wanted a radical change of senior staff and the appointment of security experts ejected from the sector and the Communist Party after 1968. Sacher pointed out that these people had themselves been involved in crimes against humanity in the 1950s, but the Civic Forum insisted that they had atoned at a great cost as opponents of the “normalisation” regime (one typical example was the OF expert on State Security Oldřich Hromádka, who had commanded the Jeřáb [Crane] Guard Division in the uranium hard-labour camps, but later signed Charter 77). The disputes on policy and principles were accompanied by peculiar machinations with the State Security archives, clearly intended to exploit information and selectively discredit public figures according to the needs of interested groups. Right up to the June elections, the Civic Forum, like the Public against Violence, had only an indirect influence on the running of the ministry in concern. In this situation, pre-election lustrations [screenings for past involvement with the Security Services] of the candidates of political parties and movements took place on a voluntary basis. These were organised hastily, with inevitable shortcomings including dubious manipulation of evidence and frauds, but at least initiated the difficult process of purging collaborators with the secret political police from public life.⁸

The policy of consensus was essentially unchanged, but it cannot be said to have remained completely resistant to the pressure brought on it by the activities of the opponents of communism. This is evident not only from the lustrations, but from the Law on Judicial Rehabilitations passed by the Federal Parliament on 23 April 1990. The law was a step forward, but with limits given by the continuity with the year 1968, when rehabilitations were interrupted by Soviet occupation. The post-November-1989 elite approved the law without major reservations because it left the question of political and judicial responsibility for injustices and crimes wholly untouched. The law spoke of “victims,” not of “resistance fighters,” and its wording presented these victims as merely passive objects of Stalinist police and judicial tyranny rather than active resisters against totalitarianism. The law suffered from a range of shortcomings (above all absurd residual penalties) that were,

8 See ŽÁČEK, Pavel: “Sachergate”: První lustrační aféra. Nesnáze postkomunistické elity (nejen) se svazky Státní bezpečnosti [“Sachergate”: The First Lustration Affair. The Problems of (Not Only) the Post-Communist Elite with the State Security Archives]. In: *Paměť a dějiny*, Vol. 1, No.1 (2007), pp. 50–81.

following the intervention on the part of the Confederation of Political Prisoners, removed by amendments adopted in 1991 and 1992. It was clear that rehabilitations would not be the last word of the opponents of the velvet path.

Against the “Nomenklatura Brotherhoods” and “Communist Mafias!”

In the June 1990 parliamentary elections, the Civic Forum won an overwhelming victory in the Czech lands (with around fifty percent of votes) and the Public against Violence (with around thirty percent) won persuasively in Slovakia. The Czech democratic movement now had large groups of deputies in the Federal Parliament and the Czech National Parliament. The direct influence of regional forums on politics at the centre increased substantially, while the (great) potential for splits in opinion shifted from the decision-making structures of the movement (above all the OF assembly) to political institutions (above all the parliaments). Almost immediately after the elections were over, the seemingly monolithic massif of deputies started to crumble along fault-lines of ideology and interest. Indeed, a political spectrum started to crystallise on an ideological axis right – centre – left. The key catalysts of the process of fragmentation included the Czech-Slovak rift, disputes over economic reforms and attitude to the “socialist” past and the KSČ. We shall consider the last of these in more detail.

Dissatisfaction with the way the communist question was being handled erupted again at the second post-election assembly of the Civic Forum, which took place in Prague on 30 June 1990. The leader of the movement, Petr Kučera, launched a defence of the post-election tactics toward the Communists; the latter had won around fourteen percent of votes, and the Civic Forum had given them proportionate representation in the parliamentary procedural posts and committees. Kučera argued for the need to distinguish between old Communists and democrats inside the party, to support the latter and so encourage the transformation of the Communist Party into a modern left-wing party. According to Kučera, “simplistic anti-communism” in the electoral campaign had boosted the election results of the KSČM [Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia] by prompting the Communists on all levels to close ranks and find effective strategies. There was definitely a certain amount of truth in this. All the same, the founders of the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) Daniel Kroupa and Pavel Bratinka (who, in the wake of the elections, were disengaging their party from the OF structures but still attending the meetings of the leading OF groups), emphatically rejected the claim and called the appointments of communist deputies as Vice-Chairman of the Federal Parliament and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee “an absolute calamity,” that would encourage continuing growth in the “self-confidence of the communist mafia.” Their view found far greater favour with the delegates at the assembly, as can be seen for example in the speech of an OF representative from Kutná Hora, who warned that the “communist nomenklatura brotherhood” was moving from the political sphere

into the economy and that there was a great risk that soon “former comrades will be economically the strongest group in the population.”⁹

Warning appeals from the regions were arriving at the Prague OF Coordination Centre all through the summer. In mid-August, a situation report based on these appeals claimed that the situation was critical. Organised brotherhoods were consolidating their position in the factories and concerns with the aim of seizing power and property; they were seeking to take over power by a legal route – with victory in the November local elections planned as a “revenge” for the defeat in the parliamentary elections. They were constantly muddying the waters, slandering the new elite, throwing Civic Forum activists out of their jobs, funnelling property from local government or factory/firm budgets into newly founded stock companies, manipulating appointments to jobs, intimidating and bribing. The conciliatory policy represented above all by the Czech Prime Minister Pithart was just grist to their mill. “The civic forums are in this way actually paralysed and do not know how far they can go. The Communists laugh in their faces,” the report summed up.¹⁰

To give an idea of the urgency of the problem, let us consider the content of a letter from the OF District Assembly in Chrudim dated 26 June 1990. It contained the comment that while the Civic Forum won the parliamentary elections, “in the economic sphere, the influence of the old nomenklatura cadres survives,” and this was alarming. The letter appealed to the political elite of the Civic Forum to behave responsibly. Where was the promised scenario for economic reform, where was the investigation and prosecution of former functionaries for the abuse of power and theft of property promised by prosecutor Rychetský, where was the prosecution of communist politicians for treason committed in August 1968, why has the issue of communist nationalisation of huge property been side-lined, who was monitoring the movement of agents of the secret/security services, the Soviet KGB and the Czechoslovak StB, into the business sphere, why had the investigation of the events of 17 November 1989 stalled, why was the rehabilitation of the victims of communism not continuing, why were former communist notables still receiving royal pensions? How in this situation could deputies vote to approve a parliamentary vacation? How under these circumstances could the Czech Prime Minister appear for the second time on television defending the leaders of the old regime? “The local mafia can laugh in our faces.”¹¹ Hundreds of letters to the OF Coordination Centre in Prague were full of such questions and complaints.

At the end of the vacation, the decision-making bodies of the OF Coordination Centre (above all the Collegium – a board where leading politicians of the OF from the parliamentary leadership, government and other political structures met

9 *A ÚSD*, Archive of the KC OF, Inv. No. 13, Minutes from the OF Assembly, 30 June 1990.

10 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 117, Situation Report, 13 August 1990.

11 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 15, *Nikdo nic neví? Dopis Okresního sněmu OF v Chrudimi z 26. 7. 1990 (za správnost ručí: Ing. Ivan Pištora, manager, Jana Chalupová, sekretář)* [Nobody Knows Anything? A Letter of the Regional Assembly in Chrudim dated 26 July 1990 (liable for correctness Ing. Ivan Pištora, manager, Jana Chalupová, secretary)], Supplement to Minutes from the Meeting of the Collegium of the KC OF, 30 July 1990.

weekly) started to react to the pressure from below. The first major debate took place on 23 July; in the discussion, the problem of replacing the management in the concerns was closely linked to the question of economic reform, the final form of which was then a subject of fierce dispute. Speedy restitution of nationalised property would mean new owners for many of the concerns, but restitution was the subject of a fierce ongoing battle, its outcome unclear. The Minister of Finance, Václav Klaus, considered restitution to be an “enormously difficult route,” likely to complicate and lengthen the whole process of privatisation,¹² which was itself no guarantee of a rapid change. Another option for the replacement of the old management was to allow foreign investors into concerns, but no political consensus had been reached on this question, and so no legal norms and regulative mechanisms were yet in place. The situation was similar with regard to the idea of a simple dismissal of directors and deputies and their replacement from the ranks of OF activists. The elite of the Civic Forum were unanimous in the view that any hasty radical approach would only make the situation worse. In the debate, it was often bitterly claimed that capable replacements were not available or very hard to find. The atmosphere of discontent and suspicion (well summed up by Petr Uhl’s complaint, “the old structures are doing business using stolen money!”) was patently stoking support for speedy and vigorous economic reforms. In this atmosphere, any kind of a gradualist strategy had no chance of success; even the leftists of the Civic Forum (for example, Rudolf Battěk from the OF Club of Social Democrats and Petr Uhl from the Left Alternative) backed the reform that was explicitly put forward as radical.

On the other hand, it was clear that economic legislation would not be enough to relieve the growing tension in the regions, since not even a speedy passing of transformation laws would guarantee, “the active replacement of nomenklatura managers,” as Vojtěch Sedláček put it at the beginning of a meeting of the Collegium of the OF Coordination Centre on 6 August 1990.¹³ Surprisingly, systematic pressure from the local forums was reflected in the views of the OF politicians present, which had evidently hardened. The Deputy Prime Minister of the country’s Federal Government, Pavel Rychetský, spoke of the need for a vigorous change initiated and directed from above and reaching “lower down into institutions”; Communists were penetrating into senior positions and OF representatives were being dismissed; people were losing trust; rules for dismissal of the old “cadres” had to be adopted. The President of the Supreme Court of the Federal Republic Otakar Motejl brought up the possibility of screenings. The Chairwoman of the Czech National Parliament, Dagmar Burešová, was in favour of an extensive replacement of judges distrusted by the public. The Director of the Czechoslovak Press Agency Petr Uhl and the Vice-Chairman of the Federal Parliament Jan Sokol pointed out that the problem could not be tackled in some blanket way and that there was a need to distinguish between state administration (with the possibility of a directive method) and the

12 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 15, Minutes from the Meeting of the Collegium of the KC OF, 23 July 1990.

13 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 16, Minutes from the Meeting of the Collegium of the KC OF, 6 August 1990.

economic sphere (with the possibility of procedural dismissal and new appointments by open competition). A member of the OF Coordination Centre Collegium, Libor Prudký, demanded a speedy change in employment laws to include newly defined criteria for the dismissal of senior staff. The Vice-Chairman of the Czech National Parliament Václav Žák appealed to all ministers to draw up lists of senior staff who should leave their sectors; an expert committee composed of parliamentary deputies would then decide on whether they should remain in place or retire. The Minister of the Economy of the Federal Government, Vladimír Dlouhý, asserted that until rules were established, nothing effective could be done in the ministries.¹⁴

* * *

At the third post-election assembly of the Civic Forum on 21 July, one of the representatives of the affiliated Club of Politically Engaged Non-Party-Members (KAN), Albert Prouza, made a speech in which he harshly criticised the policy of the OF. His barely concealed outrage was turned against the Czech Prime Minister Pithart, whom all the radicals continued to regard as the embodiment of the policy of concessions to the “old structures.” Prouza saw the matter in very stark terms: the Civic Forum was becoming a platform for leftist politics and was ceasing to represent the non-partisan majority, which was anti-communist and wanted a vigorous settling of accounts with the totalitarian system and its posthumous children (in this connection, he then appealed to all the discontented to join the KAN). He also defended the Hodonín Civic Forum, which had drawn up a similar list of district nomenklatura “cadres” and was demanding their resignation: “We understand that [rank-and-file] Communists are individuals, and that there is a need to differentiate [between them]. The situation is completely different with nomenklatura cadres – there are no distinctions to be made there. It is here that I see the value of the [Hodonín] list. [...] Lists of this kind should be drawn up in every district. This list gave Dr. Pithart a sick feeling. I had a sick feeling when I realised that by what he was saying, he was strengthening the communist mafia.”¹⁵ While in Prouza’s eyes the Czech Prime Minister (who had been a member of the KSČ for

14 Petr Pithart, in his notes to this text, written in April 2009, stated: “Among other things, for two successive evenings and nights (sometime in the summer), I used all my authority to get and keep together all the important lawyers from the government and courts (Motejl), around ten people – in Lazarská Street [the then seat of the Czech Government], for a furious brainstorming to consider all thinkable and unthinkable ways of taking legal action against the nomenklatura cadres in the economy. It took hours and hours. We did not come up with anything revolutionary; we had already done everything that was possible.”

15 *A ÚSD*, Archive of the KC OF, Inv. No. 14, Minutes from the Assembly of the OF, 21 July 1990. On the situation under scrutiny, Prouza commented: “The Communists have not left the concern, they are in the nearest campaigning centre and from there they are influencing the business sphere via economic bosses, spreading chaos and uncertainty. The economic management continues to have firm support in their cronies of the same stamp in the central organs and even in the Presidium of the Government. Unfortunately, we can say that the situation is similar in all the sectors of the national economy, including agriculture.”

a few years in the 1960s) embodied the appeasement of evil, the Federal Minister of Finance Klaus (who had never joined the KSČ) represented the right political direction – his radical economic reform promised a “speedy return to Europe.”

The next Civic Forum Assembly that took place on 18 August saw a dramatic confrontation between Prime Minister Pithart and several delegates from the local forums. In his opening speech, the Chairman of the OF Club of Parliamentary Deputies, Petr Kučera, who was a representative of the same policy as the Czech Prime Minister, announced plans for a process that he called a “Second Revolution” (ascribing authorship of the term to President Havel), aimed at shifting the nomenklatura structures. He promised that the Presidium of the Federal Parliament would adopt legal measures in the next few days to make this revolution possible. Other administrative measures would also be taken to sweep away the “old structures” from the central organs on the basis of “cadre criteria” that had been already accepted. Following on from this, the privatisation process would be launched in September. It would start with restitutions of small-scale property, continue with so-called “small privatisation” (the auction of smaller concerns), and finally involve what was called “big privatisation” of the industrial giants. Kučera also promised that the rather neglected campaign aiming at nationalising the property of the Communist Party would be resuscitated and energetically pursued in parliament. In addition, the Civic Forum would put strong pressure on the KSČ to proceed with democratisation and to make a complete break with Stalinist and Bolshevik practices. Kučera talked tough: “It must be made clear to the Communist Party that if it hesitates with its purge [...] there is a very real likelihood that an attack on its position, an attack on the CP itself, will be an organic part, the most important part, of the local government elections.”¹⁶

A speech made by the Prime Minister of the Czech Government Pithart (which was later published in the Civic Forum Information Bulletin under the title “I Will Protect the Legal Order”¹⁷) was distinctly more sober than Kučera’s. The Prime Minister did not want to yield to pressure from the local forums. He resolutely rejected the proposal of the Hodonín, Prague and Hradec Králové OFs for the conditional discharge of all management staff in economic organisations, institutions, institutes and media agencies and their replacement by uncompromised and competent people. He reminded his audience that the Czechoslovak legal order recognised no concept of “conditional discharge,” and that its blanket application would be extremely problematic, since for a certain time all management and expert activities in the country would cease and there would be a danger of descent into chaos. In any case, who would decide on appointments to the vacated positions? Civic forums or a committee appointed by political parties? “Would committees of this kind be granting something like a nomenklatura blessing,” the Prime Minister asked, and went back to his arguments of 19 January 1990: membership of the Civic Forum

16 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 15, Minutes of the Assembly of the OF, 18 August 1990.

17 See *Infórum: Informační Bulletin KC OF* [Information Bulletin of the KC OF], No. 36 (21 August 1990), p. 5.

was no guarantee of moral impeachability and professional competence, and suspect people, careerists and former “little friends and helpers” had also infiltrated the Civic Forum. Almost all citizens had in one way or another, more or less, been involved in the structures and practices of the fallen regime, and only a few could claim a clean conscience. On the other hand, Pithart conceded that real, dangerous mafia types were sitting in many concerns and needed to be ousted as soon as possible. How? The legal measures set out by Petr Kučera would enable ministers to deal with them effectively and on the basis of law. The Czech Prime Minister himself appealed to his ministers to proceed in this way as soon as the relevant laws were passed; he added that just a week before, the Czech Minister of Agriculture Bohumil Kubát had dismissed twelve directors of state farms. Finally, he expressed support for the view that rapid privatisation and the introduction of a free market would do a great deal to purify the poisoned atmosphere.

The defence of the legal state as put forward by Prime Minister Pithart did not earn much of a warm response among the delegates to the assembly. The first to comment was the representative of the Civic Forum in Chrudim, Ivan Pištora, the author of the letter cited above. He said that while no one doubted about the Prime Minister’s sincere intentions to build a just legal order, Pithart’s conception depended on the belief that the nomenklatura “cadres” still at the head of concerns, offices and organisations shared the same values. But this was a profound mistake, caused by over-abstract starting points and ignorance of specific instances. “Our mafia bosses walk on the streets and are laughing in our faces – after all, your Prime Minister defends us!” In any case, legal measures planned by the Presidium of the Federal Parliament were only intended to remedy matters in the economic concerns, but this was too little, because the situation was alarming practically everywhere: in the prosecution offices and courts, in the military garrisons and elsewhere. “It is really necessary to intervene not only in production or economic units but in all spheres of life,” he insisted. He resolutely defended the list of nomenklatura “cadres” drawn up by the Civic Forum in Hodonín (Prime Minister Pithart in his response objected that “informative tips on individual cases,” against which he had nothing, were something quite different from a “list” of unacceptable people then circulating throughout the country).

The Minister of Agriculture, Kubát, a member of the Czech Government, spoke in the same spirit as Pištora. He demanded the adoption of speedy and effective measures directed against mafia men, who had money and “today are starting up far bigger businesses, and consolidating their position in the form of joint-stock companies.” He was seconded by the West Bohemian delegate Karol Stome, a deputy in the Federal Parliament, who added that the removal of nomenklatura “cadres” was not discrimination and that it was primarily a political question and only secondarily a legal one – the revolution must not be considered to be over. He also bitterly complained that the problems were being discussed in the Collegium of the KC OF, and not in the OF Club of Deputies – ministers were not communicating with their deputies and the heads of the group were cut off from the base of the movement. Others attending the assembly spoke of the need for blanket personnel changes.

For example, the delegate for the Civic Forum of Prague 2, Jiří Payne, suggested that information from the fight against the mafia should be gathered and general criteria for procedure should be drawn up. He was thus unwittingly returning the whole discussion to the beginning, because he was demanding something that had already been proposed many times before and on many levels of the movement.¹⁸

“The Second Revolution” and “Condemnation of the Crimes and Deformations of the Totalitarian Regime”

As often before, the anniversary of the Soviet invasion on 21 August 1990 proved to be a significant factor in Czechoslovak political developments. This time the August anniversary brought a symbolic shift of view on the communist question. Above all, the speech made by the President of the Republic opened up space for a more radical approach to the question. Václav Havel spoke in the name of those calling for a new revolution, and said what they wanted to hear: “Our revolution is not over.” He also met them more than halfway by describing the problem in dramatic, urgent and expressive terms. He spoke of the unresolved “legacy of the totalitarian system,” which was causing general dissatisfaction and frustration. The country was still plagued by “powerful structures” and “bureaucratic colossi”; the “tentacles of invisible mafias,” transformed into “suspect stock companies,” were making dirty deals, buying and selling property that belonged to all; “the mafia of the mammoth concerns of the housing economy are doing a lively trade” in non-residential property that should serve small enterprises; the Czech catering sector was a “dangerous jungle,” where people were exposed to bad service and often cheated, and so on and so forth. If the president was giving an accurate picture, then the velvet policy needed fundamental revision. What then were Havel’s recommendations? He urged concentrated and peaceful pressure of the kind that had characterised the civic movement in November and December 1989: “We must once again proceed non-violently and tolerantly, but resolutely and speedily.” Every citizen should join the activities directed against the “totalitarian mafia.”¹⁹

On the anniversary day of 21 August, radical anti-communists organised their own events. The Collegium of the Civic Forum Coordination Centre distanced itself from these gestures and made it clear that the meeting of the Civic Forum on Wenceslas Square addressed by President Havel had nothing to do with the event held there on the same day by the Club of Politically Engaged Non-Party Members, the Movement for Civic Freedom and the Union of Auxiliary Technical Battalions (Svaz PTP – former members of battalions where political undesirables were forced

18 A ÚSD, Archive of the KC OF, Inv. No. 15, Minutes from the Assembly of the OF, 18 August 1990.

19 22. výročí okupace [The 22nd Anniversary of the Occupation]. In: HAVEL, Václav: *Vážení občané: Projevy červenec 1990 – červenec 1992* [Esteemed Citizens: Speeches July 1990 – July 1992]. Praha, Lidové noviny 1992, pp. 16–18.

to serve). All the same, the views of the delegates of the assembly on “nomenklatura brotherhoods” were not very distinct from those of the anti-communists at this stage. It looked as if the intensifying repugnance for the communist past and present must inevitably lead to a basic revision of the policy of compromise in the very near future.

Five days after the assembly and two days after the public meeting, that is on 23 August 1990, there was general assent in the Council of the OF Coordination Centre to a view that matched the critical mood of the local forums, i.e. that “there is need to change the legal thinking: a functionary who obtained his position on the basis of his “red book” is indefensible, and people who are sitting in posts acquired in unjustified ways cannot be conserved, because this would mean discriminating against others.”²⁰ This represented a discernible shift from earlier attitudes in the OF Coordination Centre: professional capability could no longer be the criterion for keeping a position, and in the future, political affiliation should be the criterion (in this context, one should mention that there were reports on the “desperate situation” in the Ministry of Engineering and Electro-Technology, which was controlled by Communists in 93% of cases, while the activities of the local civic forums were being effectively sabotaged). The Council of the KC OF identified with criticism of the Czech Prime Minister Pithart – the charge that his attitudes were too abstract and “do not relate to the real world.” It instructed its representatives to draw his attention to this, to try to influence him positively and get him to change those of his views that did not correspond to the majority sentiments in the Civic Forum.

Meanwhile, what about the planned legal measures which were to be initiated by the Presidium of the Federal Parliament that Kučera and Pithart had spoken about at the recent assembly? On the day they were passed (30 August),²¹ at a meeting of the Council of the Civic Forum Coordination Centre, it was bitterly claimed that “people do not believe they will change anything,” and were even afraid that “that they may be exploited from the other side.”²² The Coordination Centre therefore had no option but to “mobilise again” and organise the replacement of old managements in collaboration with the district forums. Jan Štern Jr. said that this would be a temporary revolutionary measure, which until the reform of the country’s Labour Code would “make purges possible in a legal form.” The best informed politician of the Civic Forum, Petr Kučera, added that “we are expecting a purge of the centre sometime in mid-September” that would be directed against “1–2 personnel

20 Extract from Minutes of the Council of the KC OF from 23 August 1990. In: *Infórum*, No. 37 (28 August 1990), p. 2.

21 On 30 August 1990, the Presidium of the Federal Parliament adopted three legal measures: measures on the extension of the functions filled by nomination, also measures to supplement Law No. 111/1990 on state concerns, and measures to amend Law No. 177/1990 on several measures relating to the property of political parties, political movements and social organisations. The first of these was intended for the dismissal of “cadres.”

22 A ÚSD, Archive of the KC OF, Inv. No. 119, Minutes from the Meeting of the Council of the KC OF, 30 September 1990.

officers” in each ministry. Kučera was thus confirming the trend suggested in the preceding days: the deciding factor would be the moral fitness of senior managers, and expertise would be only secondary.

On 31 August, *Rudé právo*, the daily of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, published internal guidelines of the Civic Forum entitled “Principles of Procedures for Personnel Changes in the Central Organs.” It presented criteria and a guide for the removal of “cadres.” In the first section, there was a detailed enumeration of nomenklatura reasons for dismissal, the decisive criteria being membership and participation in local and central organs of the KSČ after 1970, studies at party schools in the Soviet Union, cooperation with the State Security and so on. The first section set out specific procedures and powers of removal. The Communists immediately published the material as a warning.²³ The head of the Civic Forum Club of MPs Petr Kučera responded quickly with the claim that it was only one of several proposals, and denied that any changes would be made on similar lines. President Havel, in his radio *Talks from Lány* on 2 September, admitted that he was rather shocked by the published instructions, and reminded the audience that he had urged no one to pursue “communist-type purges” in his speech of 21 August. He confirmed that the published document was not a central government directive (if it had ever been intended as such, it could not be one now), and asserted his support for the principle that the decisive criteria should be professional competence of senior staff and not their former membership in one KSČ body or another. Apparently, he thus unwittingly denied the entirely opposite attitude that had crystallised in the past few weeks under pressure from below in the Council of the Civic Forum Coordination Centre.²⁴

This state of affairs exposed the development of fundamental differences between the two leading bodies of the same movement: the Council and the Collegium of the OF Coordination Centre. Radicals from the local forums had direct influence on the Council, and this was projected in its unusually progressive conclusions. By contrast, it was the politicians of the Civic Forum who met in the Collegium; they, above all the ministers of the Czech and the Federal Government and the functionaries of the Czech National Parliament and the Federal Parliament, carried the responsibility for the smooth operation of the various ministries and organisations, and had little enthusiasm for extensive “purges.” This became evident at the meeting of the Collegium of the OF Coordination Centre on 3 September 1990. In half of the recorded comments, we can still see the influence of strong pressure from below (unfortunately, the name of the speaker is not given in most cases): “People below have a right to be distrustful. The cadres may be capable, but they have another face, I do not believe they are irreplaceable.” – “The public is demanding dismissal not just for moral reasons, but also because they see the reason why nothing is happening in these people.” – “We need to prevent their commer-

23 Zásady postupů personálních změn v centrálních orgánech [Principles of Procedures for Personnel Changes in the Central Organs]. In: *Rudé právo* (31 August 1990), pp. 1 and 5.

24 See *Ibid.*, (3 September 1990), p. 1.

cialisation (the setting up of firms, services, share-companies by people from the state administration)! It is a precedent of how to do business with state property. Otherwise the state administration will cease to be trustworthy!" – "Do not compare our changes to the purges conducted by the totalitarian regime, the likeness is only superficial.²⁵ Improve the principles and put them in a form that the public will accept. Differentiate: what will be a flaw in the case of one individual, will not matter in the case of another in the context of other circumstances." – "We can't react to people's mere opinions. We have to have some basis! [...] We need to give state offices a new face. To publicise what has already been done [in this matter], and get thirty-year-old university graduates appointed."²⁶

By contrast, the other fifty percent of the fragmentarily recorded opinions can be characterised by reluctance to embark on extensive replacement of personnel. "The way this has been formulated so far is in breach of international rules." – "It blocks international relations." – "If people are just exercising pressure beyond their remit (instead of working in the local authorities), there needs to be action from above and a statement on where a line has been drawn under the changes." – "[Minister Dlouhý]: Of six undersecretaries five [have been] sacked, but despite that nothing much is happening, there are not enough people [available] and they are not capable of the job. Let anyone who is halfway capable and not burdened by the past go and do it! [We must] find criteria on which to dismiss people [evaluation of complaints], and criteria for [accepting] new people; I am asking the OF Coordination Centre to support me in keeping a good undersecretary."²⁷

* * *

During a Collegium meeting, which took place on 19 September 1990, the Czech Prime Minister Pithart reported on the standpoint of the Czech Government on the dismissal of senior staff: legal measures were not to be applied mechanically, but very cautiously and in a differentiated way; people without professional expertise and people who had failed morally were to leave, but without petition campaigns or culling lists. In this context, there was also a debate on the dramatic disintegration of unity in the Civic Forum Club of Deputies in the Federal Parliament and the Czech National Parliament. Pithart asserted that the deputies who had begun to profile themselves as the right-wing stream were consistently building up their position by focusing on those problems on which the responsible OF politicians had been unable to concentrate. One of the leading Council members, Martin Palouš, added that they were over-dramatizing the difference between those below and those at the top. The Collegium therefore condemned the "expressions of primi-

25 The author of the remark was evidently reacting to the statement (quoted above) of President Havel in his *Talks from Lázně*.

26 A ÚSD, Archive of the KC OF, Inv. No. 19, Brief Record from the Collegium of the KC OF in the Czech National Parliament, 3 September 1990, 7:00 p.m.

27 *Ibid.*

tive anti-communism directed at personal cadre-creation and rubber-stamping.”²⁸ All the same, precisely in relation to the general radicalisation from below, there was criticism of Prime Minister Pithart’s performance on television: the image of a deeply ruminating, doubting intellectual was at odds with the exercise of a political function at the top of the state executive, and the public was calling for vigorous words and deeds.

A response was soon forthcoming. On the very same day, the Czech Prime Minister attended a meeting of the Political Club of the Civic Forum and there, for the first time, conceded that it was essential “to fully reflect the mood in society and consider the need for a certain act of catharsis.”²⁹ One of the leading politicians of the movement, who had hitherto been regarded as a brake on progress in settling with the past, had grasped that there was no alternative but to respond to the increasingly radical attitudes in Czech society, represented by the local forums. The club immediately adopted a resolution to the effect that it would begin to prepare a “symbolic ‘trial’ to condemn the culprits” of the totalitarian regime and would seek to initiate legal steps to prosecute them.³⁰ At this moment, the structures of the Civic Forum – or so it plausibly seemed – were imbued with the will to set the wheels in motion. One week later, on 26 September, the theme became the main topic of discussion in the Political Club of the Civic Forum, at a meeting that included key leaders of the movement – Petr Kučera, Martin Palouš and Vojtěch Sedláček. Kučera spoke of the need to set up the equivalent of a Nuremberg Tribunal for the crimes of communism.³¹ At the same time, however, he conceded that it would be very hard to find conclusive evidence (letters written to the Soviets by traitors in August 1968), and that public condemnation would involve providing Communists with room for their own defence. Nonetheless, the leaders of the political parties associated in the Civic Forum considered the organisation of a “special legal action,” to take place before the eyes of the Czechoslovak public and lead to the “moral condemnation of the crimes and deformations of the totalitarian regime

28 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 21, Report of the Meeting of the Collegium of the KC OF, 19 September 1990.

29 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 33, Minutes of the Meeting of the OF Political Club, 19 September 1990.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 34, Minutes of the Meeting of the OF Political Club, 26 September 1990. In his notes commenting the presented text, written in April 2009, Petr Pithart states as follows: “There was never any consideration of a ‘Nuremberg Solution,’ but there were ideas of a ‘Russell Tribunal.’ I explained, in the corridors of the Czech National Parliament, to small groups of deputies what this would mean; they were enthusiastic and we talked about it unofficially for a few days. But during that time, we reached the conclusion that it was not possible. We did not know how to do it. How to construct it? From whom? There was no *material for catharsis* here. I keep saying this. ‘Historical material’ of this kind provides you with great possibilities, but if it is weaker, it shows itself up as overblow. [...] This was not forgotten. Then we went back to it once again, maybe after the elections, but we came to the same conclusion even faster than at the beginning of the year. In our situation, a grandiose solution of the kind was not suitable, probably everyone sensed that.”

after 1945,” to be inevitable.³² It would involve the condemnation of both individual communist politicians and totalitarian organisations. Vojtěch Sedláček added that it was important not to confuse two things: first of all, there was to be a symbolic act of condemnation, and only then the legal prosecution of individual culprits. Those present agreed, and set up a five-member committee to take the plan forward.

The Disintegration of the Civic Forum and Indefinite Postponement of the “Second Revolution”

The next mentioning of the new initiative was long in coming; it appeared in the minutes from the discussions of the Council of the OF Coordination Centre from 11 to 13 October 1990, and stated tersely that the political club would present a proposal for a “moral tribunal” to condemn communism.³³ Obviously, nothing at all had been happening. Nonetheless, 13 October was of great significance for the future of the Civic Forum, because it was the day on which the assembly voted Václav Klaus, the Minister of Finance and leading proponent of a speedy and radical economic reform, chairman of the movement. The collective leadership of the Coordination Centre, composed of leading politicians and supported by President Havel, had not wanted such a development and was unpleasantly taken aback by it. Their candidate, Martin Palouš, was the clear loser in the contest, and most of the delegates of the district forums made it clear that they wanted changes in the leadership, structure and operation of the movement. It soon emerged that Klaus as chairman intended to transform the Civic Forum into a right-wing political party and that the majority of the delegates of the district forums, election managers and perhaps a half of all the parliamentary deputies elected on the OF candidate list, wanted the very same. Of course, political authorities in the leading groups of the movement and in high state functions spoke against it. They argued that the citizens had cast their votes for the Civic Forum as a broad political movement and not as a right-wing party in the elections. The very existence of the Political Club of the OF, in which there were twelve very different active political subjects (and another three applying to join) at the time, was also seriously endangered.³⁴ The club in concern was suddenly faced with the possibility of its own dissolution. There was

32 *A ÚSD*, Archive of the KC OF, Inv. No. 34, Minutes from the Meeting of the OF Political Club, 26 September 1990.

33 *Ibid.*, Inv. No. 123, Minutes from the Meeting of the Council of the KC OF, 11–13 October 1990.

34 The Agrarian Party at the OF, Association of Radicals for a United States of Europe, Club of Politically Engaged Non-Party Members, Club of Members of the Movement for Civic Liberty, Club of Social Democrats for the OF, Left Alternative, Civic Democratic Alliance, Obroada [Revival] – Club for Socialist Reconstruction, Council of Poles in the Czechoslovak Federal Republic, Roma Civic Initiative, Party for the Defence of Culture, Union of Germans in Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovak Party of the Humanist International, Republican Party, Union of Pensioners.

no time left – it appeared – for a “Nuremberg” solution to the communist question. In the minutes of the meetings of the Civic Forum Political Club after 13 October, we find no mentioning of the plan; instead, they were full of fear for the future and they contained appeals for the preservation of “broad pluralism” that would enable the small political groups to survive. These fears soon turned out to be all too justified. The problem was tersely but wistfully summed up by a representative of the Defence of Culture Party at the meeting of 7 November: “You can hardly create a movement that functions like a party.”³⁵

In the minutes of the leading OF bodies – the Council and Collegium – de-communisation was not mentioned at all. Instead we find multiplying evidence of the growth of internal tensions. On 22 October, Petr Havlík, an advisor to the Chairman of the Civic Forum Václav Klaus, presented his concept of rapid transformation of the movement into a right-wing party in the daily paper *Mladá fronta*. He argued that the legitimate membership base of the Civic Forum consisted of parliamentary deputies, who held a mandate from the electorate. Eighty of these, i.e. roughly half of all the OF deputies in the Federal Parliament and the Czech National Parliament, had already joined the Inter-Parliamentary Club of the Democratic Right. This strong group, “had disassociated itself from diffuse hopes connected with socialism,” and the change in the ratio of forces had now to be reflected in the leadership of the Club and the Presidium of both legislative bodies. “Kučera will cease to be Chairman of the Parliamentary Club in the Federal Parliament and Kotrlý in the Czech National Parliament. Rudolf Zukal, Miloš Zeman and Valtr Komárek will cease to head their parliamentary committees.” According to Havlík, the OF Coordination Centre would likewise face radical changes. The only legitimate (“because elected”) OF organ was the Council, but because it was “very weak,” its composition needed to be changed entirely. “The leaders of the OF – hitherto the quartet of Petr Kučera, Dáša Havlová, Vojtěch Sedláček and Martin Palouš – will also disappear,” the mushrooming administration in its so-called Špalíček HQ, consisting now of around 120 people, would be substantially cut back and the Political Club of the OF Coordination Centre, which was “a kind of an internal National Front,” would simply be abolished. The high-handed oligarchy of the OF Coordination Centre, where executive power had been accumulating and limiting the decision-making powers of the individual government sectors, would end and the Collegium would be turned into an advisory organ for policy planning purposes. In sum, there would be no purge, but the creation of the kind of environment that would force left-orientated people “to leave of their own accord.”³⁶

35 A ÚSD, Archive of the KC OF, Inv. No. 40, Minutes of the Meeting of the OF Political Club, 7 November 1990.

36 Do roka z OF strana: Vytvoříme prostředí, aby levice odešla sama [Making the OF a Party in One Year: We Shall Create Conditions to Ensure that the Left Leaves of Their Own Accord]. In: *Mladá fronta* (22 October 1990), p. 2. In the article, the journalist Karel Kovanda reproduces the views conveyed to him by Petr Havlík.

Havlík's views outraged the leaders of the Council and, therefore, there was an extremely bitter confrontation at a meeting of this body on 30 October (attended by the Chairman of the Civic Forum Václav Klaus). The supporters of the *status quo* defended the concept of an open political movement, while those who favoured a right-wing party attacked it. In a summarising speech, Klaus said that the existing state was unsustainable: there existed a clearly distinct right-wing current at the central level, and numerous influential groups without a mandate alongside it; the Civic Forum was not so divided at the lower levels, but on the contrary the overwhelming majority of activists wanted to work in a right-wing political party.

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Let us set all these milestone events in broader context so as to convey the kind of atmosphere and accumulation of problems in which the political elite was working at the end of the first year of freedom. Very complicated and difficult discussions continued between the Czech and Slovak leaders on jurisdictions, constitutions and the form of federation; to judge by minutes recording debates in the leading groups and lobbies, the Czech side had little idea how to deal with the unpredictable Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, who enjoyed great popularity in Slovakia (indeed, as one of the minutes recorded, his mother movement, the Public against Violence, was just as helpless). The highly controversial planning of economic reforms (on restitutions, small and large privatisation and many other norms), had moved to the legislative bodies, where disputes over their form were continuing. The anxiously awaited local elections took place on 24 November, with the Civic Forum keen to see its parliamentary victory confirmed. This was indeed what happened, with thirty-six percent of the votes cast going to the OF, but the gains by the Communist Party, with seventeen percent, were surprisingly substantial; it was as if the much medialised "Second Revolution" theme had fallen flat. Judicial rehabilitations were progressing slowly and the Collegium of the OF Centre appealed to the courts to speed up the process of redress for victims of totalitarian despotism. We have mentioned only the most important problems of the political agenda. The political elite were literally overwhelmed by these and other tasks and practically all of them had a claim to be tackled as a priority issue. It was in this situation that, on top of everything, the Civic Forum started to fall apart dramatically. It is therefore not surprising that the "Nuremberg solution" to the communist question was forgotten in the maelstrom of new problems and challenges.

The process of dismissal of senior staff on the basis of the law of 30 August was also going far less smoothly than its originators had hoped. This emerges from the minutes of a meeting of the leading OF bodies (it will not be possible to establish the real state of affairs by archival research until after 2020). At a meeting of the Council of the Civic Forum Coordination Centre on 13 November, Libor Prudký commented in a spirit of resignation that "the trouble is that in many places the OF did not take action in time and overslept and that its cooperation with the firms was not up to scratch. The prestige of the OF started to fall, the silent majority

grew, and then fear took hold.”³⁷ Petr Kučera added that the law was used only by ministers of the Czech Government, while the Slovak Government had failed to react at all and so no ministers of the Federal Government took action, “even though all [of them] claim the opposite.” The process of changes had come to a halt because the Civic Forum failed to show the will to put things into order. If Kučera was right, then a particularly piquant irony emerges, i.e. the Czech Prime Minister, Petr Pithart, criticised for excessive conciliation, may have, in fact, done more to remove nomenklatura “cadres” than all the politicians of the Civic Forum put together.

The outcome of the stark polarisation of views at the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991 was the final disintegration of the Civic Forum in February 1991. Successor subjects rose from its ashes in the form of Klaus’s Civic Democratic Party (ODS), and Dienstbier, Pithart and Rychetský’s Civic Movement (OH). The Civic Democratic Alliance, the Liberal Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Club of Politically Engaged Non-Party Members had already split off earlier. The other parties in the Civic Forum, which had no representation in the country’s parliaments, were consigned to a marginal existence and soon faded away. Each of the named subjects formulated an attitude to the past in its own way. In general, it can be said, however, that those that exploited the general anti-communist mobilisation to shatter the disputed legitimacy of the Civic Forum, turned away from sharp anti-communism as soon as they achieved power and returned to the pragmatic policy of compromise, stiffened by radical words when the situation required it. The Civic Movement, which identified with the legacy and values of the Civic Forum, continued with the existing policy, while the Civic Democratic Party signally failed to proclaim any commitment to a radical settling of accounts with the communist past. It published an open letter to all potential supporters as early as on 27 February 1991, in which we read: “We do not want and will not support any form of cheap anti-communism,” (and these words were in full agreement with the official standpoints of Václav Havel and Petr Pithart). Anyone who had been a member of the People’s Militias, or an employee or agent of the State Security, was barred from joining the ODS, but former membership of or candidacy for the KSČ was no obstacle. The Civic Democratic Party did not consider it right to build a “so-called absolutely clean party of the kind that ODA, for example, is trying to be.” The ODS did not want to shut the door to those former members of the KSČ, who “had never been a pillar of or active collaborators with the former regime.”³⁸ Many capable people, who had been concerned only with pursuing their careers and had not committed any crimes, would otherwise lose the chance to take an

37 *A ÚSD*, Archive of the KC OF, Inv. No. 128, Minutes from the Meetings of the Council of the KC OF, 13 November 1990.

38 *Ibid.*, Collection of KAN Documents (from Zdenka Hradcová and Bohdan Dvořák, not yet inventoried), Letter to the ODS Preparatory Committee (signed by Petr Havlík, Miroslav Macek, Luděk Vychodil, Jiří Kovář and Václav Klaus), 27 February 1991.

active part in the building of democracy and the free market. The fledgling ODS already had such people on its side and very soon in the party as well.

*The Solution to the “Communist Question”
from the Perspective of the Radical Anti-Communists*

The parties and organisations that were orientated primarily on a thorough-going settlement of accounts with communism had developed an essentially ambivalent relationship with the Civic Forum. On the one hand, they sharply diverged from and criticised the compromise policy of the victorious movement, but, at the same time, they tried to gain a foothold in its structures throughout 1990. Only inside these structures could they exercise their very limited influence on the direction of public matters. For example, on 6 September 1990, at a meeting of the Council of the OF Coordination Centre, it was asserted that there had been a rupture between the Club of Politically Engaged Non-Party Members and the Civic Forum as a result of disloyal remarks of Albert Prouza in the press: the leaders of the KC OF Council agreed that it would be impossible to continue cooperating with the Club of Politically Engaged Non-Party Members. Yet, in fact, the KAN continued to operate without problems in the Political Club of the Civic Forum Coordination Centre until the latter's demise. This unusual symbiosis of intolerance and tolerance was only possible because those small political parties existing under the broad umbrella of the Civic Forum never achieved any decisive influence on the management and direction of the OF movement and the latter's leaders could simply ignore them. After the disintegration of the OF, the radicals of the KAN, the Movement for Civic Freedom (HOS) and other anti-communist groups started to take soundings on which political party represented in governments and parliaments would be the most advantageous for them to ally with. They failed to push through their distinctive programme, however, either as a coalition partner of the Civic Democratic Alliance or later in collaboration with the Civic Democratic Party.

Anti-communist public meetings and events continued on an occasional basis after the elections. On the anniversary of the Soviet Occupation on 21 August 1990, the KAN, HOS, the Confederation of Political Prisoners and Union of Auxiliary Technical Battalions held a meeting in Prague entitled, “August and the KSČ.” Miroslav Dolejší, a representative of the Confederation, presented a very wild interpretation of the past based on what he entitled three communist coups – in 1948, 1968 and 1989. According to Dolejší, the final coup had been the “most cunning”: it had been carried out by “professional politicians,” hiding behind the mask of “humanity, human rights and national understanding.”³⁹ A political prisoner in the 1950s and 1960s, Dolejší had been writing his own wide-ranging interpretation of the events that took place at the end of 1989 and in 1990, completing the work on 11 August and

39 *Ibid.*, Confederation of Political Prisoners of Czechoslovakia, Speech of a Representative of the Confederation at a Public Meeting on Wenceslas Square, 21 August 1990 at 5:00 p.m.

intending to present it at the September conference of the Confederation. The text was written in a painstakingly thorough and academic tone, but presented an extraordinarily contorted picture of Czechoslovak history of the previous twenty years based on conspiracy theories. Dolejší branded the so-called Velvet Revolution as a “clumsy legend” in the document, because in his view, the revolution was carefully planned and prepared in advance by foreign secret services – the Soviet KGB, the American CIA and the Israeli Mossad – in collaboration with the Czechoslovak State Security and Charter 77, which had been, according to him, controlled by former Communists; the outcome of all the Central European revolutions of 1989 was thus “to leave power in the hands of communist parties – more or less covertly (the re-naming of parties, tactical alterations to programmes and so forth).”⁴⁰ According to Dolejší, the peoples of the Central European countries had been the victims of an elaborate fraud.

The text, written just for the internal consumption of the Confederation of Political Prisoners, was printed (without the author’s knowledge) at the beginning of 1991 as a separate supplement to the weekly *Republika*, published by the extreme nationalist Association for the Republic – the Republican Party of Czechoslovakia. The “Analysis of 17 November” provoked unanimous outrage among the new political elites and was condemned as a deranged and dangerous pamphlet. Although the “analysis” was based entirely on a prefabricated conspiracy theory and cited no verifiable facts, it is worth trying to understand why a former long-term political prisoner should have come to such an extreme interpretation of the situation.

Some of the victims of communist tyranny had been inclining to political anti-Semitism, starting from the premise that the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (including its offshoots) was a conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons (Marx was a Jew; there were many Jews among the Bolsheviks, etc.). They could not accept as innocent the fact that Charter 77 had not been liquidated as an anti-regime initiative like the anti-communist activities (even less serious ones) in the 1950s. The involvement of former Communists in the Charter struck them as proof that the omnipresent “Jewish-Free-Mason conspiracy,” highly sophisticated and run by secret services, counted on the apparently excluded functionaries of the Communist Party to act as vanguard for later quasi-democratic political revolutions. The determined denial of the authenticity and spontaneity of the “Velvet Revolution” was also a reaction to the prevalence of a very simplistic concept of resistance to the communist regime. After the fall of communism, those political prisoners of the 1950s, who were demanding the recognition of their status as part of the Third Armed Resistance [the first and second being the armed resistance in WWI and WWII] were forgotten, unlike the dissidents and Chartists; it was as if resistance had only started after 1968. What was hardest of all for the former political prisoners to stomach was that many of the Communists who had taken part in draconic persecutions (or approved them) in the 1950s, but then, after 1968, been excluded from the KSČ

40 DOLEJŠÍ, Miroslav: *Analýza 17. listopadu* [Analysis of 17 November]. Loket nad Ohří, C & B Agentura 1990, p. 3.

and later signed Charter 77, were now, after 1989, returning to public positions with glory and honour. One typical example (already mentioned) was Oldřich Hromádka – in the 1950s the commander of the Jeřáb Guard in the labour camps. At the end of the 1960s, he had been excluded from the KSČ, later he had signed Charter 77 and taken part in dissident activities, and finally, after November 1989, he became the Civic Forum's chief expert on State Security issues.

For Miroslav Dolejší, his encounters with Vladimír Kolmistr had played a fateful part in his tragic life. In 1950, Kolmistr as chairman of a district committee of the Czech Socialist Union of Youth had ensured that Dolejší was thrown out of a local engineering high school for hanging the British flag at a student party. Dolejší was arrested under dramatic circumstances soon afterwards and sentenced to twenty-three years in gaol.⁴¹ Kolmistr, on his part, played a role in what was known as the revival process in 1968 and, consequently, was expelled from the KSČ. Two decades later, in 1989, he became one of the leaders of the Club for Socialist Perestroika, Obroda [Revival] and the Kladno Civic Forum, a few weeks later he was co-opted to the Federal Parliament and later elected to the Czech Parliament. This was too much for a political prisoner who had spent eighteen years in prison. Psychologically speaking, it is very easy to understand the feelings of a victim, who finds his fate largely ignored by state and society while meanwhile those responsible for his unimaginable suffering do not simply go free, but are even lauded as victors over totalitarianism.

The general premises of integral anti-communism as a political current, formulated more soberly as a set of themes and tasks, were to be found in the programme of the Club of Politically Engaged Non-Party Members, adopted in January 1991. This programme started with a typical dualistic sketch of the situation: in November 1989, the compromised regime had been peacefully overthrown, but, unfortunately, too many reform Communists, who dated the evils of the totalitarian state only back to 21 August 1968, had managed to enter the governments, the parliaments, the state apparatus and the media. Yet, the evil had started on 25 February 1948. It was therefore essential to discuss and assess the whole period of 1948–1989 thoroughly in the Federal Parliament, and not just to focus on the so-called “normalisation” which followed the Prague Spring of 1968. It was also necessary to achieve dignified judicial rehabilitation of persecuted citizens and the restitution of confiscated property; to meet the demands of the Confederation of Political Prisoners by recognising the so-called Third Resistance; to publish lists of employees and secret collaborators of the State Security; to radically reduce the pensions of former communist bosses and to thoroughly purge the state offices, institutions and firms of corrupted senior staff. All this had to be done as a priority,

41 His life is described by Prokop Tomek in the article “Tragický případ Miroslava Dolejšího a Eugena Vrby” [“The Tragic Case of Miroslav Dolejší and Eugen Vrba”]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 16, No. 2–3 (2009).

vigorously and quickly, because without a “thorough-going settling of accounts with the past,” a just and prospering society could not be established.⁴²

Let us compare this pithy agenda with the programme declarations of the political subjects arising from the ruins of the Civic Forum – subjects which claimed to embrace liberal, conservative and democratic values and had their representatives in the parliaments and governments. The Civic Movement distanced itself from the type of programme represented by the KAN and the like in 1991: “We do not need to create an image of the enemy. Ideological dogmas are foreign to us. We reject political extremism.” Not a single word about February 1948. “For us the events of 1968 are proof that socialism based on Marxist ideology is incapable of reform. We do not agree, however, with attacks on those who tried to reform it. We consider such action to be a sign of weakness and lack of self-confidence.”⁴³ The programme documents of the Civic Democratic Alliance from December 1989 and from 1992 contain no explicit position with regard to the fallen regime, and prioritise the formulation of the party’s own principles and goals.⁴⁴ It was the same with the Civic Democratic Party, which explicitly rejected any revival of the ideas associated with 1968, in which it saw the dangerous myth of the “third way.” We find no explicit positions on the communist past and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia in the first numbers of its bulletin. The key themes contained the first party statements, mostly related to the question of economic reform and the building of party structures, and problems of Czechoslovakia’s constitutional order in second place.

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The Club of Engaged Non-Party Members continued to consider a public act of national catharsis to be as a priority and tried to set the ball rolling by itself. The KAN proposed that an international tribunal on communism started on 25 February 1991 (the day of the forty-third anniversary of the “communist coup”). What was this supposed to be and what was it supposed to do? One possibility was described by a KAN activist from Ústí nad Labem. He wanted to include the whole period from 1917 in the investigation, i.e. to start at the roots – the actions and influence of Russian and Soviet communism, and not to limit the focus to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and perhaps China, but to consider the international communist movement as a global phenomenon, from Pol Pot’s Cambodia to the Italian Red Brigades, from Castro’s Cuba to the West German terrorist groups. He wanted everything that had already been investigated to be exploited, but in ad-

42 A ÚSD, Collection of KAN Documents, Programme Declaration of the KAN, January 1991.

43 *Ibid.*, Archive of the KC OF, Civic Movement: Programme Goals, Statutes, Procedural Regulations, Decision-Making Regulations, Economic Regulations, 27 April 1991.

44 See HAMERSKÝ, Milan – DIMUN, Petr (ed.): *10 let na straně svobody: Kronika ODA z let 1989–1999* [10 Years on the Side of Freedom: A Chronicle of the ODA 1989–1999]. Brno, Bachnat 1999, pp. 257–288.

dition demanded a new search on the basis of inter-state cooperation. The result was supposed to be a comprehensive and global evaluation of communism as an ideology, state power and a totalitarian system. It would not be an organised act of revenge, but a quest for truth. A strong and persuasive moral court would have a greater impact than the condemnation of specific individuals. The democratic community would reject and denounce the principles of authoritarian and totalitarian government and confirm the democratic principle on which it wished to build its individual, national and state existence.⁴⁵

The problems of such a “settling of accounts” are patent: the Nuremberg Tribunal judged those accused of German war crimes committed in the relatively short period of six, or twelve years respectively (1933/1939–1945). The communist regimes had lasted much longer – in total three-quarters of a century – and established themselves over a whole third of the world, while in the remaining two thirds their offshoots or cells had been likewise active in one way or another. In the context of Nuremberg, we speak of the “justice of the victors,” and while they were undeniably victors, their justice will always raise questions (after all, from the perspective of the year 1989, there were criminals among the judges themselves). But who was it that had defeated communism in 1989? The United States of America and Western Europe by their economic and military superiority? Or the opponents of the communist regime in the individual socialist countries? And if so, then who – members of the armed resistance, or the dissident defenders of human rights, striving for dialogue with power? And could the former Communists – the architects of a system they later saw through, who joined the resisters, also be regarded as the victors? Or was communism defeated by the demonstrating crowds (of long passive, now engaged non-party members) at the end of the 1980s? And what about the Communists themselves – primarily the Polish and Hungarian ones, but in the end the Czechoslovak Communists as well – who voluntarily gave up their rule and shared political power with the opposition?

Czech De-Communistation on the Model of Postwar Denazification?

At a meeting held in Prague–Strašnice on 21 November 1990, KAN activists made a presentation to the public on how denazification had been conducted in post-war Germany, specifically in the British occupation zone.⁴⁶ While they did not explicitly claim that Czechoslovak de-communistation should be governed by the same rules, the subsequent development of this conception of the KAN suggests that this was the point of the exercise. In April 1991, the chairman of the club

45 A ÚSD, Collection of KAN Documents, “Navrhují zřízení mezinárodního tribunálu” [“I Propose the Establishment of an International Tribunal”], Ústí n/L., undated.

46 *Ibid.*, Zpráva o denacifikaci ve spolkové zemi Nordheim-Westfalen [Report on Denazification in the Federal Land of Nordheim-Westfalen], signed by Vladimír Talášek and Jaroslav Dědek for the KAN Central Council, 6 November 1990.

in concern, Bohdan Dvořák, passionately defended the possibility of conducting de-communisation on the model of denazification. He argued with Vladimír Bystrov, who had criticised such a solution on the pages of the weekly magazine *Reflex*. Dvořák reminded his readership that a preparatory seminar for a Conference on the Crimes of Communism had been held in Prague. Given what we already know, it is likely that this action, organised by the KAN and the Confederation of Political Prisoners, was originally intended to be the “moral tribunal,” about which the highest representatives of the Civic Forum had spoken in September 1990. Dvořák concluded his open letter by challenging the policy of conciliation: “The absence of ‘revolutionary decrees’ following November 89, which some even consider our ‘Velvet gain,’ is today fertile ground for further immorality, further corruption and moral morass.”⁴⁷

His detailed explanatory notes form the core of the letter, and when using them as a guide, we can get an idea of how de-communisation as envisaged by the KAN would have been conducted, for example, on the territory of the capital city Prague. It would be premised on differentiation between two categories of responsibility: criminal and political. Crimes and property violations would be tackled by the courts. Political responsibility would be investigated by a civic committee formed of uncompromised people of the relevant social strata or profession in combination with territorially defined competence. Let us go back to mid-1990 and outline what might have happened on this basis in a counter-factual style: In February 1990, a “moral tribunal” on the crimes of communism is indeed launched and a de-communisation committee embarks on activity in organisations, institutions, firms, schools, and government offices; it scrutinises the actions and moral profile of directors, deputies, senior staff, chairman of party cells, engaged teachers and many others. The screening is also extended to plant, local, district and town committees of the KSČ and, of course, also to the central organs – the Central Committee of the KSČ, the organs of the ministries and state offices, foreign trade concerns and so on. By analogy with the purges of the years 1970 and 1971, these are as it were *anti-screenings*, in which society in a mirror fashion settles accounts with communist “cadres” for its humiliation after the Soviet invasion of August 1968. The judgments are based on a detailed perhaps ten-page questionnaire, and then the screened individuals come before a citizen committee to explain their careers, motivation, decision-making and actions. In the case of civil servants in important posts, the committee has three options: to dismiss, suspend or leave them in place. Members of the KSČ are ultimately divided into five categories – prime offenders; strongly tainted; less tainted; complicit; untainted. And sanctions? The “less tainted” Communists, for instance, are to be banned from political life and performance of profession, and to be stripped of property gained by illegitimate means and to have their bank deposits frozen; the “complicit” are to be punished in the same way, but allowed to continue in their occupation. This is not and should

47 *Ibid.*, Open letter from Bohdan Dvořák to Vladimír Bystrov in the weekly *Reflex*, Pardubice, 5 April 1991.

not be allowed to become a blanket, undifferentiated application of the principle of collective guilt, but a painstaking examination and calibration of the level of responsibility. How such a settling of accounts would have turned out might merit deeper virtual historical exploration, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

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The concept of a hierarchy of responsibility was influenced by the postwar thinking of the philosopher Karl Jaspers, who in relation to the crimes of German Nazism proposed distinguishing between four different categories of guilt – criminal, political, moral and metaphysical. Jaspers' book *The Question of Guilt* had been translated into Czech for the first time only in the final phase of the "Prague Spring," when it was supposed to serve as a contribution to the fevered discussions on the crimes of Stalinism. It was published for the second time in 1991, clearly with a similar aim, i.e. as an inspiration on how to evaluate and philosophically judge Czechoslovak communism.⁴⁸

Privatisation with the Exclusion of Nomenclature "Cadres?"

How was the anti-communist perspective projected into ideas of transforming the centrally directed economy into a market economy? Let us consider further questions once again arising from the positions of the Club of Politically Engaged Non-Party Members. The Central Council of the KAN expressed deep dismay at the state of the Czechoslovak economy in April 1991: a year and a half after the fall of the old regime almost nothing had changed, "the economic concerns and central authorities are still in the hands of Communists, who are not only slowing down the process of reform, but are ever more often abusing it for their own ends and to enrich themselves."⁴⁹ The KAN therefore decided to push for a law that would vigorously clamp down on the activities of prominent functionaries of the KSČ in government and the concerns. It was in this spirit that the KAN drafted a more detailed position on privatisation, containing measures against "cadres": the privatisation projects were about to be launched in a situation in which there were too many individuals and organisations that had acquired their property illegally. Former nomenklatura "cadres" were clearly in positions of advantage, and this state of affairs could be called "social discrimination." In the time of *pre-privatisation agony*, "stealing/asset stripping and improper conversions into joint-stock and other companies" were taking place. For this reason, the KAN proposed that

48 JASPERS, Karl: *Otázka viny: Příspěvek k německé otázce* [The Question of Guilt: A Contribution to the German Question]. Praha, Mladá fronta 1969 and 1991 (most recently Praha, Academia 2006).

49 A ÚSD, Collection of KAN Documents, Resolution of the Meeting of the Central Council of the KAN, 6 April 1991.

people persecuted by the former regime should be given an advantage in coupon privatisation and those that had enjoyed various advantages and harmed others should be, in contrast, excluded from privatisation. Among the latter were secretaries of all KSČ committees, members of the Central Committee of the KSČ, and district, regional and municipal committees of the KSČ, all nomenclature “cadres” of the KSČ, ministers, general directors, directors and their deputies, secretaries and members of the Central Board of Trade Unions, presidents and vice-presidents of district and regional national committees, and recipients of state decorations. The privatisation committees should include representatives of civic initiatives, as was the case in the purge of the National Security Corps in 1990.⁵⁰

The actual privatisation process began in January 1991 with public auctions of shops, smaller businesses and production units, restitutions likewise started, and November saw the launch of the big popular “hit” of the privatisation project – a coupon game for the masses over state property to the value of hundreds of billions of crowns. “Small” and “big” privatisations became the dominating themes of public debate, attracting massive media attention. The interrupted revolution now found a substitute dynamic, a second wind, and this was a process in which the idea of November as an “anti-February” – in the form of settling accounts on the road from socialism back to capitalism – was expressed most strikingly. The reform that promised so much was finally really underway. Yet, critical voices continued to be raised from the edges of the political spectrum: should all citizens regardless of their past have access to the privatisation process? In September 1991, the KAN tried again to initiate a law requiring that acquisitions of property in what was known as small and big privatisation should be transparent with regard to funds used for purchase. It suggested that where sums of half a million crowns and more were involved, if the origin of the funds could not be defended, the privatised property should be confiscated and returned to the privatisation process and the fraudulent privatiser subjected to prosecution in accordance with the relevant laws.⁵¹

Instead of a Conclusion: Communism as the Eternal Enemy

Such proposals were out of step with the technocratic conceptions of the politicians responsible for the economic reform. Any sanctions against the former nomenklatura threatened to complicate the already difficult and complex process of privatisation even further. Politicians preferred to trust the invisible hand of the market, which would allegedly verify the qualities of the new capitalists with

50 *Ibid.*, KAN Standpoint on Privatisation, undated.

51 *Ibid.*, Supplement to the “Declaration on the Political Situation in the Czechoslovak Federal Republic Published by Participants of the Meeting of the KAN Central Council Expanded to Include the Chairman or Representatives of KAN Clubs from throughout the Czechoslovak Federal Republic,” drawn up by the KAN Expert Committee (Libuše Zemanová), Prague, 7 September 1991.

merciless objectivity. Faith in the market was immense – the market would force new entrepreneurs to practical and rational action, which would be to the benefit of all; the incompetent would be excluded by its mechanisms. On its way forward from the chaotic background to the political split in 1990, when for a while anti-communism seemed on the point of becoming a defining and critical factor of the new policy, the emerging democratic right had definitively adopted a pragmatically selective approach to the past and to settling with the past. Verbal and symbolic anti-communism – intense in the media and reflected for example in May 1991 in iconic gestures such as the painting of a Soviet tank in the middle of a Prague square pink – never entirely disappeared from the public statements of the democratic right's leaders, and it was expressed in very principled terms and loudly in their public declarations. All the same, in the field of legal-political acts focused on the past and present of the Communist Party, it was compromising pragmatism that prevailed.

Above all, this was a question of the struggle of the democratic right to strengthen its power in the country's institutions. There was a political battle over their control of institutions after the disintegration of the Civic Forum in February 1991. The original OF leaders, now mostly politicians of the centrist Civic Movement, remained in the leading state functions, but in the legislative bodies, it was the supporters of the right-wing liberal-conservative credo from the Civic Democratic Party, the Civic Democratic Alliance, the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party that gained the upper hand. In the struggle that ensued, what was known as "lustration" functioned as a weapon against the so-called Sixty-Eighters to some extent – for credit, influence and position. We could show this using a range of particular statements and clashes in parliament, but this would likewise be beyond the scope of the presented paper. Former high-ranking functionaries of the KSČ and collaborators with the State Security were supposed (on the basis of demonstrable archival findings) to leave governments, parliaments and state institutions. This process was grounded in the lustration law, passed by the Federal Parliament in November 1991 and the Czech National Parliament in April 1992.

The KAN and other non-parliamentary parties and associations continued to campaign for a law making it illegal for a former chairman of a regional committee of the KSČ, a former officer of the State Security, a former member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the KSČ or a manager of a firm trading in the Soviet Union to set up a privatisation fund. Such "measures," however, remained outside the field of vision of most of the right-wing politicians, who were concentrating on the general promotion of conservative and liberal values. If anything can be called a "second revolution," then it was the process of fundamental economic reform. The internally contradictory policy of broad constitutional consensus was finally anchored in more solid ideological schemata, and the post-communist *homo economicus* came to dominate the public space. Reductive political thinking turned out to be the exit route from unstructured beginnings of the transition to democracy: division into right and left, division into old and new structures, division of state

jurisdictions, division of the Civic Forum, division according to national interests, division of the federation, division of property and so on and so forth.

The conscience of the political elite nonetheless retained the imprint of what could be called the velvet syndrome. The legitimacy of transformation was grounded in a negative relationship to a repudiated epoch, and this had to be publicly declared. Thousands of personal anti-communist gestures and statements, repeatedly demonstrating and acquiring a stereotypical character, created a gravitational pull towards some public and symbolic moral act of condemnation. The idea of a “moral tribunal” was not – it seemed – simply going to die a natural death. In November 1991, the Federal Parliament passed a law about the era of un-freedom which contained a one-sentence declaration: “In the years 1948–1989, the communist regime violated human rights and its own laws.”⁵² Yet, legal acts passed in this period could only be annulled by means of special laws, and from the perspective of convinced anti-communists the declarative law was toothless. The Confederation of Political Prisoners vainly tried to push through its own version, in which the KSČ was to be branded a “terrorist and criminal organisation” and would be outlawed, dissolved and stripped of all property, which would go to the state.⁵³

In 1990 and 1991, a visible crack was opening up between the unambiguous characterisation of the communist past as a time of un-freedom and totalitarianism on the one hand, and frustration at the impossibility of drawing a “solid line” under that past on the other. This was not healed in the following years, and, on the contrary, the imperative of an uncompromising attitude to the past grew stronger. The Czech Parliament passed a law on the illegality of the communist regime in 1993, which even branded it criminal and condemnable. At the declarative level, this met the demand for unambiguous condemnation which the radical anti-communists had been making from the outset: it also stipulated that there would be no statute of limitations as regards communist crimes, if these had been crimes at the time. The law opened the space for a new institution with powers of criminal prosecution, and so the year 1995 saw the establishment of the Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism. Yet, actual attempts to punish the criminals tended to produce doubt and embarrassment rather than the anticipated catharsis. The situation paradoxically exacerbated the tension between formal repudiation and condemnation of the “old regime” and practical inability to settle accounts with the past in a speedy, effective and persuasive way. The successor Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia was henceforth spoken of as an extremist political party, but the “velvet syndrome” had taken permanent root in collective consciousness and conscience.

It is clear from the experience of other countries trying to come to terms with the demons of their totalitarian past that no legal measures or reinterpretations can

52 Law No. 480/1991 passed by the Federal Parliament of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic, 13 November 1991.

53 *Ibid.*, World Association of Former Czechoslovak Political Prisoners in Exile, Zürich: Draft of a Law Submitted in the Name of the Confederation of Political Prisoners of Czechoslovakia.

ever bring perfect justice and satisfaction.⁵⁴ On the other hand, it is obvious that it will take many decades before the surface will close over the difficult past, tainted with crimes and injustice. Unable to push through their conception by the path of law, supporters of a more radical settling of accounts sought other ways – the politics of witnesses, memory and archives, public manifestations of repugnance for communism and Communists, anti-communist performances to upset the complacency of public opinion. The fissure between formal repudiation and frustration at unsettled accounts remained unhealed throughout the 1990s and that is the case to this day. It is evident from the series of further legal acts, and political and civic activities that in recent years have culminated in the political imperative of “national memory,” demanding the opening up of the archive documentation of the communist state and a thorough study and description of its propaganda, espionage and repressive apparatus. Sometimes it seems that communism is still the greatest threat to democracy, but perhaps the greatest threat is simply uncritical submission to any kind of power.

The Czech version of the article, entitled Politické hry s “nedokončenou revolucí.” Účtování s komunismem v čase Občanského fóra a po jeho rozpadu (1989–1992), was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 16, No. 2–3 (2009), pp. 276–312.

54 See PŘIBÁŇ, Jiří: Právo, kolektivní identita a vyrovnání se s minulostí: Středoevropské zkušenosti s postkomunismem [Law, Collective Identity and Settling with the Past: Central European Experiences with Post-Communism]. In: GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – KOPEČEK, Michal (ed.): *Kapitoly z dějin české demokracie po roce 1989* [Chapters from the History of Czech Democracy after 1989]. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka 2008, pp. 288–313.

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Chronicler of Communist Czechoslovakia

Karel Kaplan and the Study of Contemporary History

Vítězslav Sommer

The beginning of the 1990s was one of the turning-points in Czech historiography. Apart from fundamental changes in personnel and institutional organisation, there was a major transformation of the thematic orientation of research, especially into the most recent contemporary history. Historians faced the difficult task of mapping and interpreting the previous forty years of the development of Czechoslovakia. This situation was not just the result of the internal needs of the field and the natural desire of researchers to tackle themes previously not spoken about, or indeed banned from discussion; exploration of recent contemporary history was suddenly a society-wide phenomenon fed by the interest of laymen who simply wanted to know “what really happened.” Nor should we overlook the role of the new political leaders, for whom new interpretations of modern Czech history could be useful tools of legitimisation, confirming the iron logic of the inevitable return to capitalism as declared by the political and media mainstream of the time.

The historian specialising in post-1945 Czechoslovak history found himself under pressure from the great social demand for the results of his research. This created a temptation to go for the sensational and meet the populist calls for radical divorce from the past. At the same time, research enjoyed support from the state and the possibilities of access to archival materials improved significantly. Furthermore,

the chance to establish contacts with Western historiographies was now open to any scholar interested in such co-operation. Founded in 1990, the Institute for Contemporary History provided a new institutional basis for research into the most recent period of history (post-1938). In general, we could say that Czechoslovak historiography entered the era of free research and scholarship, but the new possibilities could not in themselves remove the old snares. There was a high probability that a historian dealing with the still white-hot past would consciously or unconsciously become the “useful idiot” of political elites – the supplier of historical arguments for the political strategies of today.

Last but not least was the problem of generations in the context of research on contemporary history. To one extent or another, depending on age, historians had also been witnesses of the events and social processes they studied. The object of the historian’s research was closely bound up with his personal history just as in the 1960s. Therefore, coping with the thankless role of the historian-witness was another challenge that faced many scholars.

In terms of publications, Karel Kaplan became the most prolific historian in the field of contemporary history right at the beginning of the 1990s and he has essentially maintained that primacy to this day.¹ Indeed, many readers of academic and popularising historical literature see him as the key figure in the study of the history of communist Czechoslovakia.

The following article assesses Kaplan’s contribution to Czech historiography, and is an attempt to take stock of his more than a half-century of work in the field of historical research. Given the great influence of many of Kaplan’s works, the story of Kaplan the historian is at the same time the story of several decades of the Czech historiography dealing with our most recent history. I do not claim to offer any detailed analysis of Kaplan’s works, for given their quantity such a task would be far beyond the possibilities of this article.² Instead I shall try to identify the shifts

1 Karel Kaplan’s bibliography includes two collections published to mark his 65th and 75th birthday: JECHOVÁ, Květa – JECH, Karel: Chronologická bibliografie díla Karla Kaplana [Chronological Bibliography of the Works of Karel Kaplan]. In: JECH, Karel (ed.): *Stránkami soudobých dějin: Sborník statí k pětadesátinám historika Karla Kaplana* [Pages of Contemporary History: Collection of Articles Published on the Occasion of Karel Kaplan’s 65th Birthday]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 1993, pp. 17–28; BŘEŇOVÁ, Věra: Chronologická bibliografie prací Karla Kaplana za období 1994–2003, s dodatky za rok 1993 [Chronological Bibliography of the Works of Karel Kaplan in the Period 1994–2003, with Additions for the Year 1993]. In: PERNES, Jiří (ed.): *Po stopách nedávné historie: Sborník k 75. narozeninám doc. Karla Kaplana* [In the Footsteps of Recent History: Proceedings Published on the Occasion of Docent Karel Kaplan’s 75th Birthday]. Brno, Prieus 2003, pp. 352–356. It is worth noting that Karel Kaplan is also the most translated Czech historian of postwar Czechoslovak history, and most likely even the most translated living Czech historian. During his years in exile, he published books in English, German, French and Swedish, and now his books have been translated into other languages including Japanese.

2 In this article, I devote more attention to Kaplan’s earlier publications. These are more or less forgotten today, but they can be regarded as the starting-point for the whole of Kaplan’s later historical work, in relation to which Kaplan progressively defined and refined

and changes in the basic tendencies that inform about Kaplan's work and – in the limited space available – offer some critical reflections on his role in the creation of historical knowledge in the field of contemporary history.

Regional Historian and Party Propagandist (the 1950s)

Although, in many respects, Karel Kaplan's path into the community of Czech historians is symbolic of the situation in which a whole generation of historical scholars, born around 1930, arrived on the academic scene, his personal story is exceptional even in this generational context. Most representatives of Czechoslovak historiography of the 1950s and 1960s were trained at various university institutions after February 1948. In contrast, Kaplan, as one of the most prominent of those historians of recent events who established their professional profile in the 1960s (especially the second half of the decade), started his complicated journey to the profession of a historian as a regional functionary of the KSČ [the Czechoslovak Communist Party] and came to history by an atypical detour through other posts at different levels of the communist apparatus. He could thus be said to have embodied a whole complex process of engagement with the recent past in Czechoslovak conditions in his career: from the historical propaganda of the first half of the 1950s to the historiography of de-Stalinization of the 1960s, which then continued in difficult conditions outside official institutions under "normalisation" and in exile, up to the free pluralist research after 1990. It is therefore no exaggeration to see Karel Kaplan as a symbol of this complicated continuity.

At the beginning of the 1950s, Czechoslovak historiography was in a phase of major changes, most obviously expressed in changes of personnel and institutions of historical scholarship (the establishment of new institutions, the silencing of politically unacceptable historians and their exclusion from employment, the rise of party functionaries entrusted with running historical research). Another sign of the times and the following years was the ideological demand for research into the recent history as a means of historical legitimatisation of the new political order. For the whole first half of the 1950s, this tendency was expressed in the production of propagandist works focused on the history of the previous half century. It was not until the second half of the decade that the first original historical works appeared, with a gradual abandonment of the genre of ideological literature. The trend in the 1960s was then towards ever more extensive critical revision of the ongoing historiographical research of the recent history, and this culminated in the year 1968.³ Karel Kaplan's historical works fully exemplified this trend.

his method of writing. Otherwise I focus on titles in Kaplan's extensive bibliography that I consider in one way or another exceptional or particularly important.

3 I look in more detail at the theme of research on recent history in the 1950s and 1960s in the book: SOMMER, Vítězslav: *Angažované dějepisectví: Straničká historiografie mezi stalinismem*

Shortly after he left the Zlín Baťa Factory for the KSČ apparatus in 1947 (he first worked in Vysoké Mýto, and then in Pardubice),⁴ Kaplan also started to publish in the field of recent Czechoslovak history. His early work combined regional themes with a gradually diminishing but still perceptible present ideological colouring. Another distinguishing mark of Kaplan's first texts was an increasing emphasis on the exploitation of archival materials and statistical data. These brief works served the needs of regional political agitation, but still showed features that would later become an inseparable part of Kaplan's historical method.

Karel Kaplan's first venture into history was the brochure *Ke vzniku komunistické strany v Pardubickém kraji* [On the Origins of the Communist Party in the Pardubice Region], dealing with the formation of the KSČ in the Pardubice region in the years 1918–1921.⁵ His approach to the topic in no way diverged from the conventional interpretation of the time stressing the importance of the December Strike of 1920 as the key moment in the emergence of the revolutionary party and the beginning of its road to the successes of 1945–1948. Kaplan used another schema typical of communist accounts of the politics of the First Republic in a pamphlet on the Skuteč Strike published in 1957.⁶ In it, he stressed one of the favourite tropes of historical narrative used by party historiography of the time to explain the interwar political, economic and social conflicts, i.e. “the treachery of the reformists.” He described the story of the Skuteč Strike as a successful fight of the ordinary workers led by the Communist Party, at a critical moment betrayed by the leaders of the reformist unions who went over to the side of the capitalists. Kaplan went on to apply a similar model to postwar development in the region in a work eloquently titled *Kdo byl tedy vinen?* [So Who Was to Blame?].⁷ This was

a reformním komunismem, 1950–1970 [Engaged Historiography between Stalinism and Reform Communism, 1950–1970]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny – FF UK 2011.

- 4 Biographical data is taken mainly from two long published interviews with Karel Kaplan: PALEČEK, Pavel: *Exil a politika: Historici o nejnovějších dějinách a o sobě* [Exile and Politics: Historians on Recent History and on Themselves]. Tišnov, Sursum 2004, pp. 29–73; CUHRA, Jaroslav – KOPEČEK, Michal: *Jde o to, jestli se k pravdě přibližujete: Rozhovor s Karlem Kaplanem* [It is About Whether You Are Getting Closer to the Truth: Interview with Karel Kaplan]. In: PERNES, J. (ed.): *Po stopách nedávné historie*, pp. 10–29. There is a more detailed biographical sketch in the collection for Kaplan's 65th birthday: JANIŠOVÁ, Milena – JECH, Karel: *O životním příběhu českého historika* [About the Life Story of a Czech Historian]. In: JECH, K. (ed.): *Stránkami soudobých dějin*, pp. 7–16.
- 5 KAPLAN, Karel: *Ke vzniku komunistické strany v Pardubickém kraji* [The Origins of the Communist Party in the Pardubice Region]. Pardubice, Krajská poradna a studovna marxismu-leninismu b.r. (the National Library Catalogue dates this work to the end of the 1940s).
- 6 IDEM: *Skutečská stávka 1932* [The Skuteč Strike 1932]. Pardubice, Krajské muzeum v Pardubicích – Krajský dům osvěty 1957. In the very same year, Kaplan also published a documentary brochure on this theme containing photocopies of documents and period photographs (see IDEM: *Dokumenty o skutečské stávce v roce 1932* [Documents on the Skuteč Strike in 1932]. Pardubice, KV KSČ Pardubice 1957).
- 7 IDEM: *Kdo byl tedy vinen? K historii komunistické strany v období 1945–48 v Pardubickém kraji* [So Who Was to Blame? On the History of the Communist Party in the Pardubice Region in the Period 1945–48]. Pardubice, Krajský dům osvěty Pardubice 1958.

intended as an answer to a similarly titled exile publication by Bohumil Laušman, a former leading Social Democrat.⁸ In this text, too, Kaplan presented the story of certain historical events (the road to the February takeover in Pardubice) as a conflict between the interests of the people (the whole nation) represented by the Communist Party and the politics of the non-communist forces, especially the right-wing Social Democrats.

Kaplan's interpretations were entirely in line with the orthodoxy of the period, but these early works are linked to his later texts by their growing emphasis on the use of authentic materials, whether from various archives, the press or official statistics. This tendency was evident above all in Kaplan's penultimate "regional" work *Příspěvky k ekonomickému a sociálnímu charakteru vesnice Pardubické župy v letech 1918–1938* [Contributions to the Economic and Social Character of the Village of the Pardubice Region in the Years 1918–1938] which was also his first more extensive historiographical text.⁹ Kaplan tried to put together a social and economic history of the village of the Pardubice region. In the book, he dealt with the social structure of the village, the organisation of agriculture, and the consequences of economic changes for the social position of the agricultural population (housing, healthcare, schooling and so on). The work was accompanied by a series of tables containing a great deal of statistical data. Kaplan's aim was to identify the historical roots of difficulties with the socialisation of villages in the region after 1948 and, at the same time, to indicate the many basic economic and social problems with which the rural population had to cope in the interwar period.¹⁰ Despite the open propagandist slant, this is the first work in which we can clearly recognise typical features of Kaplan's later historiographical style.

Reformist Historian and Critic of Political Trials (the 1960s)

Karel Kaplan left Pardubice for Prague to take up a position in the central party apparatus in 1960, specifically the Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the KSČ. For Kaplan, the 1960s were the years when he acquired a thorough

8 LAUŠMAN, Bohumil: *Kdo byl vinen? Jak umírala československá svoboda* [Who was to Blame? How Czechoslovak Freedom Was Dying]. Vienna, Independently published by the author in 1953. There is a certain piquancy in the fact that Karel Kaplan's father had been a close colleague of Laušman in the Pardubice region (see CUHRA, J. – KOPEČEK, M.: *Jde o to, jestli se k pravdě přibližujete*, p. 12).

9 KAPLAN, Karel: *Příspěvky k ekonomickému a sociálnímu charakteru vesnice Pardubické župy v letech 1918–1938* [Contributions to the Economic and Social Character of the Village of the Pardubice Region in the Years 1918–1938]. Pardubice, Krajský dům osvěty Pardubice 1960.

10 In the introduction to the book, Kaplan wrote that the history of the village answers the question of "why there are so many various obstacles in the thinking of the peasants that make it hard for them to understand the advantages of socialist large-scale production. [...] If we want to compare what the socialist village will bring us and specifically farmers, we are forced to turn and look back." (*Ibid.*, p. 4).

knowledge of the Communist Party archives and associated work in their rehabilitation commissions. They were also a decade when he published two major historical monographs and came to identify fully with the movement of reform historiography,¹¹ and the worker in the party apparatus with an interest in the recent past became a respected historian. In the perspective of his later work, the 1960s were also above all a period of preparation, filled with detailed investigation of the archival sources and no less important personal meetings with actors of the historical events that he was studying.

Kaplan's publication activities in the 1960s at first continued to be influenced by the spirit of his prior work in the field of party propaganda. The publications *Až k vítězství Hradeckého programu* [Up to the Victory of the Hradec Programme]¹² and *A Victory for Democracy*,¹³ published also in English, were redolent of the 1950s. The first was a popularising account of conditions in the East Bohemian countryside in the years 1945–1948. The second, the brochure on the “victory of democracy,” was intended for propaganda purposes abroad, to explain the functioning of the “people's democracy” in Czechoslovakia in glowing terms and answer its opponents. The basic axis of the text was an account of the events leading up to the takeover in February 1948 as the struggle between a new form of democracy, represented by the Communists, and the supporters of the outdated First Republic system, with the result glorified as the victory of a qualitatively better form of democratic government founded on the voluntary participation of the broad masses of the people. One stage of Kaplan's career as a historian came to a definitive end with these two publications, and we might also see a certain symbolism in the fact that the last of Kaplan's efforts in the field of party propaganda came out in 1963, when the first signs of the incipient reform process were appearing.

Kaplan's two books in the subsequent years were wholly in line with the trend known as reform historiography, which in research into recent history gradually gained majority status and acted as the historiographical support for the process of Czechoslovak reform. In terms of chosen themes, Kaplan moved distinctly closer to the questions that were later to be typical of his work in his “classical period” (works published in exile and then in Czechoslovakia, later the Czech Republic, after 1989). In 1966, already working at the Historical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, he published the book *Utváření generální linie výstavby socialismu*

11 One example might be Kaplan's article entitled “Current Tasks of the History of the KSČ” published in 1963. Its argumentation is in line with criticism of the functioning of party historiography of the 1950s that were voiced at the time (IDEM: Aktuální úkoly dějin KSČ [Current Tasks of the History of the KSČ]. In: *Nová mysl*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1963), pp. 62–70).

12 IDEM: *Až k vítězství Hradeckého programu: Příspěvky k dějinám rolnického hnutí v letech 1945 až 1948 ve východních Čechách* [Up to the Victory of the Hradec Programme: Contributions to the History of the Peasants' Movement in Eastern Bohemia in the Years 1945–1948]. Havlíčkův Brod, Východočeské nakladatelství 1962.

13 IDEM: *A Victory for Democracy: Czechoslovakia 1945–1948*. Prague, Orbis 1963. The publication came out in German, French and Italian as well. I use the English edition in the quotation as I worked with it while writing this article.

v Československu [The Formation of the General Line of the Building of Socialism in Czechoslovakia],¹⁴ an analysis of the formation of the programme planning principles of the KSČ after it took over power in February 1948. With this book, Kaplan dropped regionally based studies for good and turned to important national themes of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. In general, the book was also a significant contribution to the then revived and topical theme of the possibility of a Czechoslovak road to socialism as a real alternative to Soviet Stalinism.¹⁵ Kaplan argued in favour of a specific form of socialism in Czechoslovakia which he counter-posed to the policy embodied by Stalin and based on the theory of the “intensification of class war.” Two years after *Utváření generální linie výstavby socialismu v Československu*, Kaplan published his second monograph, *Znárodnění a socialismus* [Nationalisation and Socialism].¹⁶ This was a work in which his fondness for economic history found full expression. It was based on a large amount of statistical data and offered abundant factual material. At the same time, however, it adopted a critical approach to one of the most visible features of the postwar change of regime in Czechoslovakia and like the previous book considered alternatives, i.e. other approaches to the socialisation of the economy.¹⁷

During his work on the rehabilitation commissions, Karel Kaplan gained an ever more detailed knowledge of the extent of the political repression that had taken place in the 1950s, especially the planning and course of political trials. As someone with regular access to what were normally entirely inaccessible materials from the communist archives, he became one of the few historians to have a detailed knowledge of the dark side of the politics of the KSČ in the first years after the February takeover. For Kaplan, uncovering the power mechanisms of the 1950s meant not merely finding what was to become one of his constant themes as a scholar in future years, but also thoroughly reconsidering his own personal views of the ways in which socialism had been built in Czechoslovakia.

Kaplan’s first significant publication based on detailed research on the political repression of the 1950s was the lengthy essay entitled “Zamyšlení nad politickými procesy” [“Reflections on the Political Trials”], printed in 1968 in three instalments by *Nová mysl* [New Mind], the central ideological journal of the Communist Party.¹⁸ Kaplan not only presented an account of the machinery of the political trials, but also

14 IDEM: *Utváření generální linie výstavby socialismu v Československu: Od Února do 9. sjezdu KSČ* [The Formation of the General Line of the Building of Socialism in Czechoslovakia: From February to the 9th Congress of the KSČ]. Praha, Academia 1966.

15 This was obviously a key theme of reform historiography, and also the basic problem of the Czechoslovak reform movement of 1968 altogether.

16 KAPLAN, Karel: *Znárodnění a socialismus* [Nationalisation and Socialism]. Praha, Práce 1968.

17 Kaplan’s important role in research on the economic history of postwar Czechoslovakia is not much emphasised today despite the fact that Kaplan published several studies on this topic during the 1960s. Apart from the book *Znárodnění a socialismus*, his other most important contribution was the unpublished monograph *Desetiletí* [Decade], dealing with the economic development of Czechoslovakia in the years 1945–1955 and written in the years 1967–1968.

18 IDEM: *Zamyšlení nad politickými procesy*, 1–3 [Reflections on Political Trials, 1–3]. In: *Nová mysl*, Vol. 22, No. 6, 7 and 8 (1968), pp. 765–794, 906–940, 1054–1083.

focused on the course of rehabilitations, i.e. an extremely topical theme. Although he concentrated mainly on the trial of Rudolf Slánský and his “associates,” this time he did not omit to mention the importance of the repression of non-Communists. Overall Kaplan conceived this essay as a contribution to the discussions of 1968 about the reform of Czechoslovak communism. In the context of Kaplan’s output, it was a breakthrough text, a kind of prelude to the monographic studies he later devoted to the topic. Furthermore, unlike in his later Czech texts published in exile or after 1989, Kaplan also revealed the personal motivations that led him to publish material containing such momentous information. The following passage is testimony to his own difficult personal dilemma and throws light on the feelings that impelled him to the study of the history of communist Czechoslovakia: “Like every Communist who cares deeply about the fate of the republic and socialism, I experienced bitter moments when, some time ago, I became acquainted with the details of the 1950s. Those were moments of inner suffering, severe depression and sense of contradiction, which were intensified constantly and urgently by questions from the ranks of the younger generation – their justified disgust, their reproaches and accusations of cowardice [...]. We must prevent the repetition of illegalities in any form and scope. This requires a series of measures in our political life, in the political system, but knowledge of the truth will also certainly contribute to it, and this cannot harm but only benefit the party.”¹⁹ From this conviction, formulated from the position of reform communism, it was already but a small step to the de-ideologised, strictly empirical approach that was to be characteristic of Kaplan’s best work.

If Kaplan was seeking through historiography in the 1960s a way to remedy past errors and wrongs, in the next decades, he wanted to give testimony, and above all map – describe in detail on the basis of archival materials the processes and events that had long remained hidden, in one of their forms, from the Czechoslovak and Western public. The collapse of the reform process and Kaplan’s subsequent move from the academia to the unofficial academic structures of Czech dissent was most probably the final impulse to his “turn to the empirical.” It was a turn that led to Kaplan’s definitive abandonment of historiography as an instrument of political intervention.

Historian and Witness in Exile (the 1970s and 1980s)

It is no exaggeration to call the impact of so-called “normalisation” on research into recent history devastating. Most of a whole generation of historians was forced out of academic life, or, at best, shifted into unimportant positions and compelled to change their research interests. As a leading figure in Czechoslovak de-Stalinization, Karel Kaplan was one of the historians most affected. Eventually, in 1976, he escaped from the situation by emigrating to West Germany. His departure was connected

19 IDEM: Zamyšlení nad politickými procesy, 1. In: *Nová mysl*, No. 6 (1968), p. 765.

with the now already legendary smuggling out of a great many archival materials, on which he based his research in exile in Germany.²⁰

Once in exile, Karel Kaplan was able to start capitalising on years of thorough archival research. He used the knowledge he had built up in the 1960s in a long series of titles published either in foreign-language translations or in Czech by exile publishing houses. Kaplan also engaged in a great deal of journalistic activity, taking part in broadcasts for the stations Radio Free Europe and Voice of America and writing for exile periodicals, above all Pelikán's *Listy*.

The start of his career in exile also had a certain symbolic side. Kaplan's first major foreign-language title was an unusually personal one – a kind of confession of a party functionary and historian against a background outline of some milestone events in Czechoslovak history after 1945. Published in French, his *Dans les archives du Comité Central: 30 ans de secrets du Bloc soviétique* may be regarded as a work marking the final closure of one period of Kaplan's personal and professional life.²¹ This had started with the entry of the young Communist into the official structures of the KSČ and ended with the emigration of the historian-dissident, inseparable in the eyes of the ruling elite from the “subversive” developments of the latter half of 1960s.

During almost fifteen years of work in exile, Karel Kaplan showed an ability to find research subjects that when worked up and published provided previously unknown information on the difficult recent past and threw light on places strictly guarded by the ideological apparatus. Thanks to Kaplan, West Europeans with an interest in the history of the so-called Eastern Bloc were given an insight into the practical functioning of the ruling Communist Party and real disposition of political power in Czechoslovakia.²² Kaplan also provided the Western public with books on political repression in one of the Soviet satellites that were based on authentic archival material.²³ One of his major themes was the analysis of the takeover of power by

20 There was an article on Karel Kaplan and the smuggling of party archival materials out of Czechoslovakia in *Time* magazine on 9 May 1977: “Secrets from the Prague Spring” (available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,947905-1,00.html>, downloaded 30 September 2008).

21 KAPLAN, Karel: *Dans les archives du Comité Central: 30 ans de secrets du Bloc soviétique*. Paris, Albin Michel 1978. This title – unfortunately not translated into Czech – is discussed in an analysis of the Czechoslovak historiography of communism by the French historian Muriel Blaive (BLAIVE, Muriel: *Promarněná příležitost: Československo a rok 1956* [A Wasted Opportunity: Czechoslovakia and the Year 1956]. Praha, Prostor 2001, pp. 165–169).

22 KAPLAN, Karel: *The Communist Party in Power: A Profile of Party Politics in Czechoslovakia*. London, Boulder 1987. On this theme, Kaplan also published a series of five instalment editions in German as part of the series “Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien” (see IDEM: *Anatomie einer regierende kommunistischen Partei*, Vol. 1–5. Bonn, Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien 1983–1989).

23 IDEM: *Die politischen Prozesse in der Tschechoslowakei 1948–1954*. München, R. Oldenbourg 1986. Kaplan's titles on the trial of Rudolf Slánský came out in several languages, most recently in English in 1990 (IDEM: *Report on the Murder of the General Secretary*. Columbus, Ohio State University Press 1990).

the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia.²⁴ The breadth of subjects on which he published and sheer number of titles give an idea of the importance of Kaplan's activities as a historian in exile. It cannot be emphasised enough that his books with their strictly factual content were based on archivalia in inaccessible Prague funds and so offered a previously unknown view into the interior of Czechoslovak political reality. Many of these publications became the basis for today already classic Kaplan's titles published in Czech after 1989.

In the case of the Czech editions of his texts, Karel Kaplan adopted the same strategy as with his translated titles: he used authentic source material to draw a picture of the postwar development in Czechoslovakia entirely at odds with the image of the "people's democracy" and the building of socialism presented by "normalisation" historians and journalists. In addition to a series of articles and studies, we should, above all, mention three books. The first two, *Zpráva o organizovaném násilí* [Report on Organised Violence] (co-authored by the historian and journalist Vilém Hejl) and *Nekrvavá revoluce* [The Bloodless Revolution] are known to readers from their later Czech editions of the first half of the 1990s and both are among standards of Kaplan's bibliography.²⁵ The book that has attracted the greatest attention, however, is *Mocní a bezmocní* [The Powerful and the Powerless]²⁶ which has not yet been published in the Czech Republic. Kaplan himself has quite a reserved attitude to it,²⁷ but the author of this article is not alone in considering *Mocní a bezmocní* to be one of the best on the long list of Kaplan's works. This is because the reader finds something in the text he would like to see much more often in Kaplan's writings – the combination of the view of an erudite historian with the perspective of an involved witness. This set of portraits of important communist functionaries is based not just on archive materials but on many personal meetings and back-stage information. It offers an immensely fascinating excursion into the world of the party elite, not to speak of the very interesting portraits of individual leading Communists. Unique in the context of Kaplan's output, this book suggests that the author, otherwise known for his very systematic choice of themes, still has considerable unused potential as regards the courage to express himself more as a witness, and publish more of his personal memories. These memories are

24 E.g. IDEM: *Der kurze Marsch: Die kommunistische Machtübernahme in der Tschechoslowakei 1945–1948*. München, R. Oldenbourg 1981. IDEM: *The Short March: The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia 1945–1948*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan 1987.

25 HEJL, Vilém – KAPLAN, Karel: *Zpráva o organizovaném násilí* [Report on Organised Violence]. Toronto, Sixty-Eight Publishers 1986 (Praha, Univerzum 1990); KAPLAN, Karel: *Nekrvavá revoluce* [The Bloodless Revolution]. Toronto, Sixty-Eight Publishers 1985 (Praha, Mladá fronta 1993).

26 DEM: *Mocní a bezmocní* [The Powerful and the Powerless]. Toronto, Sixty-Eight Publishers 1989.

27 In an interview with Pavel Paleček, Kaplan commented on the book: "If I had wanted to, I could have written a mass of sensational things, but I did not do it. After the revolution, I did not allow the publication of my book *Mocní a bezmocní* precisely because it was a rather light-weight kind of literature." (PALEČEK, P.: *Exil a politika*, p. 72.)

certainly highly personal and not non-partisan, yet they are very important for our knowledge of the backstage politics of the KSČ.

*Historian of the Fact-Based Understanding of the Past.
From Power to Society (since 1989)*

In 1990, Karel Kaplan returned from exile, joining the newly established Institute for Contemporary History and embarking on publishing a long series of monographs, shorter studies and editions of sources. Kaplan's bibliography grew to unusual dimensions over the following two decades, and many of his works are still basic literature on a range of themes from Czechoslovak postwar history. No historian concerned with the development of Czechoslovakia after 1945 can avoid encountering one or more of Kaplan's books. These fruitful two decades can be described without exaggeration as the crowning period of his scholarly career. He became an influential, much published and at the same time much discussed historian.²⁸

After his return to Czechoslovakia, Kaplan continued to develop his strictly empirical approach. After his experiences as a party propagandist and historian in the service of de-Stalinization and the Czechoslovak reform, he now tried to rescue research on contemporary history from the blind alley of overt political engagement in his work. The central theme of his texts is the dogged effort to describe "how it really was." Kaplan seeks the truth about the past directly in historical documents which are supposed to speak above all for themselves without superfluous commentaries that covertly or openly follow certain political goals.

In the first years after the Velvet Revolution, Kaplan emerged as a painstaking chronicler of postwar history who on the basis of an enormous mass of archival sources was trying to progressively map the most important events and social processes of the first twenty years of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Kaplan decided to solve the eternal problem of the politicisation of contemporary history by striving for maximum objectivity, with the testimony of period records as the ultimate arbiter of objective truth. Added to this was an emphasis on historical enlightenment of the public. Kaplan seeks to "open the eyes" of readers with his books and acquaint them with previously unknown facts that he considers important for the understanding of how the communist dictatorship worked, and to avoid cheap and often empty and politically motivated rhetoric, or also publicity-seeking hunts after sensations or hasty judgements on the past. The desire to deepen society's awareness

28 The fact that discussion of Kaplan's work and his influence on research into contemporary history tends to take place informally in the "backstage" of the field rather than on the pages of academic periodicals reflects not on Karel Kaplan and his work, but on the standard and frequency of scholarly discussion in contemporary Czech historiography.

of the recent past is the alpha and omega Kaplan's work as a historian – even in the knowledge that the formal aspect of his texts may suffer from this approach.²⁹

A feature closely associated with these attitudes is the very systematic character of his treatment of the past, which keeps to precisely defined sets of themes. Kaplan's interest is focused first and foremost on the way in which the Communists ruled and several related phenomena. He deals with the situation before the February takeover,³⁰ and the actual takeover of power by the Communist Party in great detail,³¹ not overlooking the political trials and repression in general.³² In addition to these “major” subjects, he also turned to more detailed, but for the political order after 1948 in many ways more fundamental features, such as censorship or the activities of Soviet advisors in Czechoslovakia.³³

His second major set of themes is that of the social processes arising from transformations of the political and economic situation. Kaplan looked not just at purely political themes, but again shows interest in questions of economic and social development and so in part returns to his works of the 1960s. Probably Kaplan's most ambitious work is his attempt at a comprehensive account of the development of the Czechoslovak state and society: the four-part two-volume *Kořeny československé reformy 1968* [The Roots of the Czechoslovak Reform 1968].³⁴ Kaplan's work on the

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- 29 Kaplan quite eloquently formulated his position in an interview with Jaroslav Cuhra and Michal Kopeček. To the question on the role of historians in the process of “coming to terms with communism,” he answered: “I think that in many respects historians still have a debt to pay. The problem is that of course every historian wants to write a great work, in which everything will be underpinned by proper notes and citations and so on. At certain times, however, in my view, the historian also has a civic duty. For example, I personally feel that when we have stuffed those people full of untruths and lies, then it is our duty to get that out of them. And, because of my new and further research, I consider it my moral duty to express myself again on what I once wrote. Historians ought to publish much more, even at the price of it not being completely in line with academic rules, of it not being how they were taught in school.” (CUHRA, J. – KOPEČEK, M.: Jde o to, jestli se k pravdě přibližujete, p. 27.)
- 30 KAPLAN, Karel: *Pravda o Československu* [The Truth about Czechoslovakia]. Praha, Panorama 1990; IDEM: *Československo v poválečné Evropě* [Czechoslovakia in Postwar Europe]. Praha, Karolinum 2004.
- 31 IDEM: *Nekrvavá revoluce*; IDEM: *Pět kapitol o únoru* [Five Chapters about February]. Brno – Praha, Doplněk – Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 1997.
- 32 IDEM: *Zpráva o zavraždění generálního tajemníka* [Report on the Murder of the General Secretary]. Praha, Mladá fronta 1992; IDEM: *Největší politický proces: “M. Horáková a spol.”* [The Biggest Political Trial: “Milada Horáková and Co.”]. Brno, Doplněk 1995; IDEM: *Nebezpečná bezpečnost: Státní bezpečnost 1948–1956* [Dangerous Security: State Security 1948–1956]. Brno, Doplněk 1999.
- 33 IDEM: *Sovětský poradci v Československu 1949–1956* [Soviet Advisors in Czechoslovakia 1949–1956]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 1993; KAPLAN, Karel – TOMÁŠEK, Dušan: *O cenzuře v Československu v letech 1945–1956* [Censorship in Czechoslovakia in the Years 1945–1956]. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 1994.
- 34 KAPLAN, Karel: *Kořeny československé reformy 1968* [The Roots of the Czechoslovak Reform 1968], Vol. I/1: *Československo a rozpory v sovětském bloku* [Czechoslovakia and Disputes in the Soviet Bloc]; Vol. I/2: *Reforma trvale nemocné ekonomiky* [Reform of the

working-class, which came out as the first part of the project *Proměny československé společnosti (1948–1960)* [Transformation of Czechoslovak Society (1948–1960)]³⁵ is an important contribution to research on the different social strata in postwar Czechoslovakia.

Karel Kaplan is an outstanding, very likely a peerless expert on archival documents for many themes of Czechoslovak history in the period 1945–1968. It is therefore not surprising that he has also achieved so much in the field of editions of sources. As in his authorial texts so in the editions of sources – produced alone or in collaboration with other scholars – he has dealt with both broad and also very specific themes. His editions have included both fundamental collections of documents on legal and constitutional developments,³⁶ and more specialised sets on particular, for example, human lives.³⁷

Popularising and summarising, overview works form a special chapter of Kaplan's output. The book *Gottwaldovi muži* [Gottwald's Men], jointly authored with the writer and historical journalist Pavel Kosatík, attracted particular attention.³⁸ This set of portraits of the top Czechoslovak Communists around Klement Gottwald nonetheless did not quite live up to expectations and failed to surpass the outstanding *Mocní a bezmocní*. The most extensive of Kaplan's work in this field is the survey, so far two-volume work *Kronika komunistického Československa* [Chronicle of Communist Czechoslovakia].³⁹ This kind of synthesising treatment has always,

Long-Term Sick Economy]. Brno, Supplement 2000; IDEM: *Kořeny československé reformy 1968*, Vol. II/1: *Změny ve společnosti* [Changes in Society]; Vol. II/2: *Struktura moci* [The Structure of Power]. Brno, Doplněk 2002.

35 IDEM: *Proměny československé společnosti (1948–1960)* [Transformations of Czechoslovak Society (1948–1960)], Vol. 1. Praha, ÚSD AV ČR 2007.

36 See above all JECH, Karel – KAPLAN, Karel (ed.): *Dekrety prezidenta republiky 1940–1945: Dokumenty* [Decrees of the President of the Republic 1940–1945: Documents]. Brno – Praha, Doplněk – ÚSD AV ČR 2002; KAPLAN, Karel (ed.): *Pražské dohody: Sborník dokumentů* [Prague Agreements: Proceedings of Documents]. Praha, Státní ústřední archiv – ÚSD ČSAV 1992; KAPLAN, Karel – ŠPÍRITOVÁ, Alexandra (ed.): *ČSR a SSSR: Dokumenty mezivládních jednání* [Czechoslovakia and the USSR: Documents of Inter-Governmental Negotiations]. Brno – Praha, Doplněk – ÚSD AV ČR 1997.

37 To stand for all the titles in the long list of Kaplan's editions of sources, we should at least mention the collection of testimonies of the State Security investigator Bohumil Doubek, which is an important source for understanding the planning of the political trials in Czechoslovakia. KAPLAN, Karel (ed.): *StB o sobě: Výpověď vyšetřovatele Bohumila Doubka* [State Security about Itself: The Testimony of Investigator Bohumil Doubek]. Praha, Úřad pro vyšetřování a dokumentaci zločinů komunismu Parlamentu ČR 2002.

38 KAPLAN, Karel – KOSATÍK, Pavel: *Gottwaldovi muži* [Gottwald's Men]. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka 2004.

39 KAPLAN, Karel: *Kronika komunistického Československa* [Chronicle of Communist Czechoslovakia], Vol. 1: *Doba tání 1953–1956* [The Time of Thaw 1953–1956]; Vol. 2: *Kořeny reformy 1956–1968: Společnost a moc* [The Roots of Reform 1956–1958: Society and Power]. Brno, Společnost pro odbornou literaturu – Barrister & Principal 2005 and 2008. (Translator's note: Since the publishing of this article, the third and fourth volume of this series came out. IDEM: *Kronika komunistického Československa*, Vol. 3: *Klement Gottwald a Rudolf Slánský* [Klement Gottwald and Rudolf Slánský]; Vol. 4: *Antonín Novotný – vzestup a pád*

however, been relatively marginal in Kaplan's bibliography. Such works merely augment and at the same time draw on a range of his monographic publications and editions of sources.

The Weaknesses and Strengths of Kaplan's Method

This brief recapitulation of Kaplan's publications since 1989 vividly demonstrates the important role he has played in research on communism in the past two decades. In the introduction to this article, I offered a general characterisation of the situation in which resuscitated research on recent history found itself at the beginning of the 1990s after two decades of stagnation under "normalisation." It is no great exaggeration to say that Karel Kaplan has become the symbol of this phase of renewal and progressive tackling of the most important themes, especially in the field of political history. On the foregoing pages, I have offered a brief outline of the formation of Kaplan the historian, his complicated but logical development from a worker in the field of party propaganda and ideology to a leading historian famous for his insistence on strictly fact-based descriptions not framed by any overt theoretical framework. The conclusion to this article, therefore, inevitably requires some overall critical assessment of Kaplan's work and his methodological premises, balanced by the awareness of the value of his long series of works to Czech historiography.

Indeed, I have identified two key moments in Kaplan's development: his rebirth from functionary to historian of the reform current during the 1960s and later his gradual transition to a position of pure empiricism, which began with the collapse of the project of reform communism and was completed after Kaplan's return from exile in Germany. The form of Kaplan's mature works is therefore the result of a long process of de-politicisation of his own academic texts. This claim is not at all at odds with the fact that Kaplan's publications have remained political. This has been the case both during his exile, when his texts played a role in revealing the hidden face of the communist monopoly on power, and after 1989, when his description of the political practices of the KSČ inevitably had its effect on the formation of the attitudes of various elements of society to the forty years of its own postwar history. In this sense, however, Kaplan's works have been political simply in the same way as any historiographical text is inevitably political (especially in the field of contemporary history).

All the same, in Kaplan's case, however, systematic renunciation of political engagement pursued through academic scholarship has had a distinctive meaning related to context. Given his privileged position in research on communism, he has managed to define a particular trend in approach to the themes investigated. Its main mark has been the sober view, refusal to allow historical writing to slide into

"lidového" aparátčika [Antonín Novotný – The Rise and Fall of a "Popular" Aparatchik]. Brno, Společnost pro odbornou literaturu – Barrister & Principal 2009 and 2011.

the rhetoric or judges and moralists – a temptation that has continued to be one of the biggest pitfalls of historiography in the period of post-communist transformation. Kaplan's works have not therefore become sticks with which to beat the past, but magnifying glasses, showing up the details from the various chapters of the most recent Czechoslovak history.

On the other hand, while Kaplan's approach to research on the past has in recent times played an important role in forming the attitudes of historians and the public to the era of communism, his methodological starting points have provoked a range of critical comments. The attempt to make information contained in the archival materials the "truth about the past" (which in the context of Czech historiography today is still a majority scholarly strategy) has been already seriously challenged for at least three decades by the post-modern critique of historiography. Likewise analysis of the history of scientific knowledge, minimally since the times of Thomas S. Kuhn, has undermined the earlier belief in the obvious truth of scientific objectivity and the truth-value of scientific judgements. Seen through the lens of these critical conceptions, Kaplan's aspirations to achieve historical truth understood as a complete description of past reality,⁴⁰ seem rather naïve.

Kaplan is also vulnerable to serious criticism from the ranks of constructivist historians, who fruitfully integrate various social theories into their research. From this perspective, many of Kaplan's works are a supremely positivistic rehashing of archival documents without adequate interpretational framework, mere collections of data lacking the essential models for generalisation.

The third direction of potential criticism is based on judgements on the narrative character of historiography. If historiography is regarded as a distinctive literary genre, then it is natural to reflect on the literary qualities of the historian's writing and the influence of the chosen narrative strategy on the formulation and content of the text. From this point of view, there is some justification for criticism of Kaplan's literary style, which quite frequently conveys a vast amount of factual information in a form that it is hard for the reader to take in. This for many readers indigestible style of presenting scholarly findings corresponds to Kaplan's strictly empirical approach, in which the archival material itself is accorded more of a role in communicating the message about the past than the historian.

Critical comments on Kaplan's work could of course be developed on a broader front. Given such an immense number of publications, other conspicuous weaknesses of style and method could certainly be found. Yet, the justifiable criticism of aspects of Kaplan's work needs to be balanced by acknowledgment of his indisputably major contribution to our knowledge of the most recent Czech and Czechoslovak history. In many respects, his achievements have been literally ground-breaking. His influence is also evident in the interest that he has awakened in other scholars in "his" themes, such as political repression or the changes in the personnel profile and political directions of the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Is it not Kaplan, who with his extensive output has defined a whole phase of

40 See CUHRA, J. – KOPEČEK, M.: *Jde o to, jestli se k pravdě přibližujete*, p. 28.

research into contemporary history with his priority focus on political history and multifaceted exploration of the repressive features of communist power?

From this point of view, a critical study of Kaplan's texts can be a useful starting-point for other historians both in terms of the definition and refinement of their positions vis-à-vis the school of research represented by his name, and in terms of the opening up of new paths in scholarship focused on recent history. What I mean here is not a rejection of Kaplan's work but a critical reading of his texts – a reflection on what this very fruitful author did not write, or other ways in which the themes he has made his own might be conceived and tackled. In this, the critical points of view mentioned above, which derive from different opinions on the nature of the historian's work, may serve as an appropriate guide.

Considering the growing interest of historians and students of history in contemporary history, we can perhaps say that the time has now come for moving beyond Kaplan's work. Nonetheless, when anyone asks for a solid and rich source of information on many questions relating to the history of communist Czechoslovakia, the right answer is still: "Take a look at what Kaplan says."

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“The Past is the Battlefield of Contemporaries”

A Conference Organised on the Occasion of Vilém Prečan’s 80th Birthday

Jiří Hoppe

The Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic was the main organiser of the conference entitled “The Past is the Battlefield of Contemporaries,” which is actually a quotation from a newspaper interview Vilém Prečan once gave.¹ The conference took place on 24–25 January 2013 in the Czernin Palace in Prague on the occasion of Prečan’s 80th birthday. The founder and the first director of the Institute for Contemporary History is a well-known figure; one could mention that he took part in re-interpreting the Slovak National Uprising and the rehabilitation of some of its main actors in the 1960s; he was one of the main editors of the so-called *Černá kniha* [Black Book] after August 1968; he emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1976 where he founded the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre of Independent Literature (located in the Schwarzenberg Palace in Scheinfeld, Mittelfranken, the historical part of Bavaria); and finally, after the democratic revolution at the end of 1989, he was appointed head of the newly founded Institute for Contemporary History. And it was Prečan’s life story and his professional interests that formed a suitable medley of topics which the conference

1 This conference report was in a shorter form published in: Jiří Hoppe, *Minulost je bitevním polem současníků* [The Past is the Battlefield of Contemporaries]. In: *Akademický bulletin*, No. 3 (2013), pp. 18–20 (see also <http://abicko.avcr.cz/2013/03/07bitevni-pole.html>).

organisers made use of to put together five blocs: “the Second World War,” “Slovak and Czech-Slovak Relations,” “Exile,” “Dissent and Opposition,” and “Building the Field of Contemporary History in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.” The titles may seem of a somewhat banal nature; however, the organisers deliberately avoided more narrowly-defined titles as they wanted to give the greatest possible free hand to the lecturers. Twenty-two historians and other specialists both from the Czech Republic and abroad promised to take part in the conference, some of them renowned experts in the field. It is understandable that it is beyond the scope of this report to summarise all the contributions; for this reason, I shall focus only on some of them.

After the current director of the Institute for Contemporary History Oldřich Tůma welcomed the guests at the opening of the conference, Petr Pithart and Milan Drápala introduced the proceedings. Both *encomia* are available for readers on the webpage of the *Akademický bulletin*. The former Prime Minister and Chairman of the Senate of the Czech Republic entitled his contribution “The Man in the Middle of Times: Thinking and Taking Action” and interconnected Prečan’s professional bibliography with his curriculum vitae. He emphasised that it was not possible to talk about Prečan’s work without at least briefly sketching his dramatic life story. The editor-in-chief of the journal *Soudobé dějiny*, Milan Drápala, for his part, focused on Prečan’s bibliography, on his “Winding Road (through/of) Contemporary History,” in great detail and with remarkable precision.

The leading Slovak Historian, Professor Ivan Kamenec, opened the first bloc of the conference with his paper “Problems of Interpreting the Slovak Wartime State.” He stressed the specific Slovak *Historikerstreit* about the interpretation of the Slovak wartime state as a historical phenomenon that has been taking place for more than twenty-three years. Kamenec did not wish to confine himself to historiography but also wanted to deal with the perception of the Slovak general public where a bipolar attitude is clear. On the one hand, a certain demonization can be traced, on the other hand, and this is more often the case, a certain mythologizing can be seen. When debating the Slovak state, “quack explanations” find an echo even today. As Professor Kamenec stated, history becomes interesting for people only at the moment when it changes into “gossip.” The paper from the renowned Polish historian Andrzej Paczkowski, Professor at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw and the Chairman of the Institute of the Memory of the Nation, corresponded to that of Ivan Kamenec. Paczkowski is well-known in the Czech Republic as the author of the excellent book entitled *Půl století dějin Polska, 1939–1989* [Half a Century of Polish History, 1939–1989]. His paper was entitled “The Second World War in Contemporary Polish Memory and Politics.” In it, he commented on surveys of particular historical events – first and foremost on the Polish defeat at the beginning of the Second World War and on the Holocaust – from the point of view of a historian. Jan Němec and Jan Kuklík concluded the first bloc with their paper “The British and the Expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia 1942–1944.” In it, they dealt with the important role of the Sudeten German minority in the radical turn of British foreign policy towards the principle of postwar expulsion of the German minorities from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Professor at Harvard University and the leading expert on the Cold War, Mark Kramer, opened the second bloc of the conference. His paper dealt with “Installing Communism in Slovakia” and he highlighted the *extensive help* he had received from Vilém Prečan who gave him contacts and thus enabled him to get in touch with Slovak historians and archivists. He focused on three key issues in his speech: the consequences of the war for Slovak politics, the strong and in many cases determining influence of Prague, and finally on Soviet intervention. Another speaker who praised and complimented Vilém Prečan was Roman Holec, a professor at the Philosophical Faculty of the Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. For him, Prečan’s work is an example of scientific perfectionism. In his speech entitled “You Have Your Gibbon, We Have Our Nejedlý,” he recapitulated the observations of the British diplomat Moberly from his study visits of Slovakia that took place in 1958 and 1959. Moberly found that the idea of an independent Slovakia was dead at that time but that, at the same time, there were significant efforts to weaken Prague centralism and, in contrast, strengthen the powers of the Slovak organs. The British diplomat was also surprised by the strong Slovak religiosity, the remarkable results of industrialisation, living standards and the question of the Hungarian minority. Vojtěch Čelko from the Institute for Contemporary History, for his part, picked a topic aimed directly at the guest of honour when he talked about correspondence between Vilém Prečan and Milan Šimečka at the beginning of the “normalisation” period (a selection of this correspondence was published in book form in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1978 under the title *Die sieben Jahre Prag, 1969–1975: Briefe und Dokumentaus der Zeit der Normalisierung*). Professor Jan Rychlík from the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of Charles University in Prague concluded the second bloc with his paper “Slovak-Czech Negotiations about Demarcating Borders in 1993–1996” which he based on the recently published second edition of his book *Rozdělení Československa 1989–1992* [The Division of Czechoslovakia 1989–1992].

Samuel Abrahám, the Rector of the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts and the publisher of the journal *Kritika & Kontext*, opened the third bloc with his paper “The Czechoslovak in Hard Times.” He appraised Prečan’s Scheinfeld Documentation Centre as a key contact point of the exile and Czech and Slovak dissent. Vladimír Goněc from Masaryk University in Brno focused on the exile discussions dealing with the term Central Europe that took place in the 1980s. He particularly highlighted the opinions of Karel Bartošek, Jan Vladislav and Václav Bělohradský. Tomáš Vilímek from the Institute for Contemporary History made use of new archival sources on the exile and emigration in the 1970s and 1980s in his paper “Emigration as a Form of Protest: New Possibilities of Research.” According to him, documents of the Passports Control and Visas Administration present new possibilities as they contain lists of thousands of people who in one way or another played a role in the so-called illegal (unauthorized) emigration. At the end of this bloc, Antonín Kostlán, the Chair of the Department of the History of Sciences of the Institute for Contemporary History, explained what circumstances and conditions helped to form the relationship of the free society in the West towards Czechoslovak emigrants and exiles and what paths were taken to reach a model that seemed to be optimal. Kostlán drew

attention to the fact that the powers were not at all ready for such an inflow of refugees and taking care of them still came under the same mechanisms that were formed at the end of the war in order to manage the extensive migration disasters that were so closely connected to the war. The core of help offered to people who lost their home was supposed to lie in their repatriation, i.e. in their returning home regardless of the regime ruling in their country. The initial stage was therefore very difficult for Czechoslovak refugees. A complete turn in the policy towards the refugees only took place after two hundred thousand Hungarians left their home country after the revolution that was bloodily suppressed in 1956.

The first day of the conference was concluded by a soiree in the Czech Museum of Music organised by the National Museum. In his partially personally-tuned speech, Martin Sekera, the Director of the Library of the National Museum and the Statutory Deputy of the General Director, expressed his respect for people like Vilém Prečan whom he and other Prague history students of the time had the chance to meet for the first time in the early 1990s. In his words, it meant the widening of horizons and, in addition, in Prečan's case also motivation in the form of a hope of finding employment one day in "his" institute. The Scheinfeld collection, handed to the National Museum for its administration (currently the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre), represents, according to Sekera, the value of the same commitment that the founder and supporters of the National History Museum and contributed to the ethos of the institution. On top of that, the Director of the Institute for Contemporary History Oldřich Tůma commended Prečan's key role in establishing the field and founding the Institute for Contemporary History. If the Institute enjoys prestige and respect at home and abroad, it is, among other things, because of the good foundation on which it can rely and from which it can still gain. After the words of thanks pronounced by Vilém Prečan and directed to the organisers of the conference and the soiree, the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra began to play the music of Mozart and Haydn. This was followed by a reception during which the participants had the chance to see an exhibition of orchestrions, mechanical pianos and a variety of other musical boxes and instruments.

Svetlana Savranskaya from the National Security Archive in Washington and George Washington University opened the fourth bloc of the conference with an extremely interesting paper entitled "The Prague Spring 1968 and Charter 77 as an Inspiration for Soviet Dissidents." She stated that these two Czechoslovak events were the most inspiring for the dissident community in the last thirty years of the existence of the Soviet Union. The Prague Spring offered hope that even the Soviet system could be reformed according to the Czechoslovak model. Charter 77, then, came into being when the pressure coming from opposition groups was the strongest and when Soviet dissidents felt isolated. The Chartists showed that they were not alone in the Soviet Bloc. The influence of Czechoslovak thought also hit a wide spectrum of the Soviet intelligentsia and it even penetrated some of the future reformers. Jiří Suk from the Institute for Contemporary History spoke after Savranskaya. He presented a paper entitled "The Present of History, the History of the Present: An Archivist, Editor and Historian of the Dissent" in which he focused primarily on Prečan's "Scheinfeld"

period. As Suk stated, Prečan became not only a historian but also a historical actor in one single person; he was the founder and inspirer of the history of the dissent, Charter 77 and the “second culture”; however, at the same time, he likewise co-created this history by his own work. Jacques Rupnik, a political scientist and historian and the Director of the *Centre d'études et des recherches internationales, Fondation nationale des sciences politiques*, closed the bloc with his paper entitled “Ten Remarks about Coming to Terms with the Past.”

Vít Smetana from the Institute for Contemporary History opened the fifth bloc when he presented his paper “About the Question of Defining Contemporary History.” In doing so, “he undertook a daring expedition on the thin ice of theory and methodology in the field of contemporary history.” Indeed, he contributed to expert discussions on the topic “what actually was contemporary history” and what time framework it actually encompassed. For various reasons, contemporary Czech history begins in 1938 for Smetana; however, Smetana added, he believed the demarcation line would change and that the future generation of historians would move along on the timeline – maybe even to 1989. Dušan Kováč from the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, author of the *Dějiny Slovenska* [History of Slovakia] published in Czech, prepared remarks about the topic “The Metamorphosis of the Idea of the National State in the 20th Century.” Jaroslav Cuhra from the Institute for Contemporary History concluded the programme of the conference with his paper “Old and New Battlefields of Contemporary Historiography.” He familiarised the audience with the project of developing a computer game which should help secondary school students to get to know basic facts about Czechoslovak and Czech history. Maybe the environment of computer games and the internet could be a specific way how to influence new concepts and interpretative frameworks of contemporary history.

Tom Blanton, the Director of the National Security Archive in Washington, together with Vilém Prečan himself, concluded the conference. Tom Blanton, like so many times on similar occasions, demonstrated his extraordinary oratorical skills when he summed up the most important moments of the conference and drew a line between the individual papers. He then said he was in a somewhat difficult position as so many different papers were delivered with the focus devoted to Prečan’s life story and professional interests. He, however, added that if he was to pick one particularly interesting area, then it would be the fascinating creation of the *Černá kniha* as Prečan managed to grasp something that historiography usually missed. In the words of Jiří Suk, he attempted to preserve immediately the fact of visible unity in its ardent state. He managed to capture something indeed unusual and important: Prečan, in Suk’s words, taught us that we had to take into consideration eyewitnesses, context, atmosphere and emotions. Indeed, he continued, studying only archival material could not convey the urgency of the moment. In addition, the application of “Prečan’s methods” could be, according to Blanton, figuratively speaking, labelled as “sprinkling pepper on soup,” as this was what made historiography much more sophisticated, attractive and richer not only for Czechs and Slovaks, but also for the wider world. Vilém Prečan then stated that the programme of the conference made

him calm in contrast to his initial doubts. He said this was so because the programme was not “over-Prečanite.” Personally, he continued, he was always one of many who wanted the same – important topics that were worth debating and moved further in formulating questions and looking for answers. He would never have achieved anything significant if he had not had the support of friends and colleagues – be it in the fight for democracy and freedom or his efforts to have better conditions for free research independent of politics. He went on to say that when he looked back at “his past lives” and listened to the detailed biographical sketch about himself, presented by Milan Drápala, he saw a completely different film in his head. In this one, he realised what he did not do in the particular stages of his life, what he still did not give in for publication and what had been delayed for maybe even fifteen years. Therefore, he said he did not “rest on his laurels” as there were so many things he had to catch with and finish.

At the very end of the conference, Prečan formulated several questions that he had had on his mind for a long time and to which he would not have the time to look for the answer. At the same time, he appealed to his colleagues-historians to adopt these questions and make them their own. For this reason, let us finish the report on the conference entitled “The Past is the Battlefield of Contemporaries” with the words of the master himself: “I would like to know the ropes of Czech, Czechoslovak and Slovak history. Understanding such cambers as the social-political movement in August and after August 1968, then the moments when the majority of the participants of the movement waved a hand and adjusted to the situation. Or the year 1989, November, December, January and then the bad mood when people are able to ridicule their own euphoria of the time. I have a feeling that the people here think that after each takeover, a positive takeover as our democratic one was, people become angels overnight. And then they suddenly realise that this lasts for two weeks; but that there are altruistic people who do not think about their own interests, who are able to sacrifice all their strength for something that is growing and finally finishes. One day the special day of history will finish, it will be an ordinary day and the people are the way they are. Emanuel Mandler, who was quoted several times, wrote the following immediately after August 1968: ‘Let us not have any illusions, the cambers were a defence reaction of the organism, almost biological, however, not able to hold out for long.’ I would like to know why it is so; if it has anything to do with the Czechs themselves that their society is inclined to give up; or are there any similarities that would show it to be the same everywhere, in every single nation and state environment. So this is what I would like to learn.”

The Czech version of the article, entitled “Minulost je bitevním polem současníků.” Konference k osmdesátinám Viléma Prečana, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 20, No. 1–2 (2013), pp. 236–241.

Review

Subjective Biography and the Limits of “Objective” Sources

Doubravka Olšáková

MILES, Jonathan: *Devět životů Otto Katze: Příběh komunistického superšpiona z Čech*. Translated from English by Petruška Šustrová. Praha – Litomyšl, Paseka 2012, 336 pp;

LAURENCE, Charles: *Společenský agent Jiří Mucha: Láska a žal za železnou oponou – intriky, sex, špioni*. Translated from the English by Kateřina Lipenská. Praha, Prostor 2012, 250 pp.

In 2012, two Czech publishing houses brought out translations of biographies of men who were not among the political leaders of the former Czechoslovak regime but whose lives say much about the fate of publicly politically engaged intellectuals of the period. This coincidence naturally invites us to compare the life stories of the communist journalist Otto Katz alias André Simone and the writer Jiří Mucha as they are presented by the American writer Jonathan Miles and the British journalist Charles Laurence.¹ Both depicted men worked for a certain time for the communist secret services and their lives are fascinating today not only for their

1 Original editions: MILES, Jonathan: *The Nine Lives of Otto Katz: The Remarkable True Story of a Communist Super-Spy*. London, Bantam 1998; LAURENCE, Charles: *The Social Agent: A True Intrigue of Sex, Spies, and Heartbreak behind the Iron Curtain*. Chicago, Ivan R. Dee 2010.

drama, but above all for the light that they throw on the vexed question of the social and political role played by public intellectuals in the course of the 20th century.

The two biographies are extremely different, yet complement each other. The story of Jiří Mucha, written from a highly subjective point of view, is very much a literary work, in which history and the intrigues of the State Security form only the background to the family drama of a British diplomat stationed in Prague in the 1950s. By contrast, the biography of Otto Katz is mainly historical in focus, although its author tries to lighten up the difficult life of a committed communist intellectual by a treatment that is novelistic in style.

As is well-known, Jiří Mucha (1915–1991) was the son of the artist Alfons Mucha. During and after the war, he worked as a war reporter and journalist, and, in 1951, he was arrested and convicted after a show trial (like many other people with a so-called “internationalist” past). On his release in 1955, he started a “new life” as a scriptwriter, novelist and writer – and also as an agent of the State Security. Mucha’s path in life was not so dissimilar to Simone’s, and at points they even crossed. André Simone (whose real name was Otto Katz, 1895–1952) threw himself into the service of the communist movement in interwar Europe and, furthermore, in the United States and Mexico during the Second World War. After returning to Czechoslovakia, he worked for a short time in prominent positions in the communist press. He was then arrested, convicted at the same trial as Rudolf Slánský, and executed.

While the life of Jiří Mucha is relatively well-known, largely because he spent most of it in Czechoslovakia – the life of Otto Katz remains surrounded by many mysteries, which thanks to his contacts across the world of art and journalism in Europe and America have taken on an aura of myth. It was precisely this sense of romantic myth that attracted Jonathan Miles. Neither he nor Charles Laurence are professional historians, and if we were to look for a characterisation of both these authors, it would probably be “journalists.” This is reflected in their approach to the genre of biography and the way they describe the lives of their subjects.

Charles Laurence’s primary concern in his book is to come to terms with his own childhood and family. Above all, he is trying to work out his relationship with his mother who – as the reader senses in places – was “stolen” from him in Prague by Jiří Mucha. Laurence’s writing style is impressive; the facility natural to a journalist and many years of experience is very much in evidence. Indeed, it is the most remarkable thing about the book, for the account is readable and unaffected, and Laurence dissects family secrets with the same clear eye and trenchant quality that we expect from the reportage of a war correspondent in bloody conflict zones.

Meanwhile Jonathan Miles wrote a book that is undoubtedly based on archival material from various secret services for, to a large extent, it copies the “plots” of these reports. We constantly learn who left from one place for another, who spoke with whom, who was sent where and with whom, and who was entrusted with which task. What is really behind all this minutely described coming and going remains rather unexplored. From time to time, Miles tries to break through the barrier of espionage reports and situate one or another person with whom Katz-

-Simone collaborated in the wider political and social context of interwar (and marginally also postwar) events on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, but these occasional contextualising efforts do little to make the text more comprehensible.

We might say that the two books very precisely mark opposite boundaries of the possibilities of historical narrative: Charles Laurence moves in the orbit of history so as to tell his own story from his own angle and with his own hypothesis, while Jonathan Miles seems to aspire to tell the story of Otto Katz as it really, objectively happened. However, therein lies the big problem and in fact insuperable flaw of his approach, for he does not write the life of Otto Katz as it was, but merely as it was recorded in various official documents. If Miles had been less historically ambitious in this sense, he might have written a sensitive biography.

Unlike Miles with Katz, Charles Laurence writes his story of Jiří Mucha from an unabashedly personal point of view. The subjective element runs through his book from the beginning and culminates in the final scene of his small, very private revenge. Laurence places Jiří Mucha at the centre of all the action of the book, seeing him as the prime mover of the tragedy of his family. His description of Mucha is purely subjective: his sense of Mucha's demonic personality is apparent from the very first page. For example, Mucha is described as a “sleeping crane” (p. 71). Indeed, Laurence tends to construct Mucha as a kind of embodiment of something impalpable, in which the horror of communism, shadowy Prague, sexual orgy and ultimately a certain hint of Oedipus complex are all mingled.

If subjective narrative is not admissible in traditional historical writing, Charles Laurence certainly demonstrates its full potency in relating his own version of a historical story. In the interests of historical objectivity one might point out, however, that his narrative tends to deny Mucha something that was in fact a major facet of his character, i.e. his quest to get to the bottom of his own identity. This is what Charles Laurence is seeking for himself; his desire to uncover in his own case the moulding power of character and identity exposed to a drastic situation is the main reason why he wrote the whole book in the first place. The role of identity in an extreme situation was a theme also present in hints and suggestions, but continually, in Mucha's work, above all after his release from the mines of Jáchymov. One point of the story – and the whole of Charles Laurence's great struggle with the personality of Jiří Mucha – may ultimately be the extent to which Mucha and Laurence are alike.

Laurence often takes no account whatsoever of Mucha's possible personal reasons for choosing this or that way of behaving, thinking and so on, because the search for identity is a quest that he claims exclusively for himself, and with a preoccupation bordering on obsession. In this respect, Mucha clearly might have deserved a little more forbearance, for what are his books *Studené slunce* [Cold Sun] and *Podivné lásky* [Strange Loves], written towards the end of his life, if not a search for the meaning of his own life and an attempt to find his own identity? Or do we really have to agree with Laurence's hypothesis that Mucha's actions were always motivated by mere egoistic interest and his whole life one of deliberately premeditated calculation? Is a life really so simple?

While Laurence emphasises the social context of Mucha's activities, allowing them to stand out against the background of the Cold War, Miles tries to do the same with Katz but with a completely opposite result. The almost tabloid focus on the espionage side of Katz-Simone's activities (all the contacts, the meetings, the telephone calls) has the effect of obscuring not just Katz's personality, but even the context of his involvement in espionage. There are some very valuable ideas in Miles's book, but the overall superficial treatment means that unfortunately they remain mere suggestions and are never elaborated in detail and developed into any form (synthetic, analytic, psychologising, etc.) with which a historian could work. For example, Miles has some interesting comments on the influence of the London mock "Counter-Trial" of 1933, which was organised after the Reichstag fire by the authors of *The Brown Book of the Burning of the Reichstag and the Hitler Terror*,² on the later Stalinist trials in Central Europe and the role of propaganda for communist regimes altogether (p. 113). Despite a few bright moments of this kind, however, one cannot avoid the feeling that Miles handles facts and events in a largely tabloid sensationalist manner.

Rather paradoxically, what Miles's book signally lacks is a historical framework, a context for events that would lend meaning and point to the adumbration of all Katz's endless contacts and assignments. Jonathan Miles covers up an absence of history with a plethora of figures, campaigns, cities and names.

This gets us to another major shortcoming of Miles's book. Although crammed with dates, data and profiles of individuals, the book makes no historical connections between the different periods of the development of the international communist movement. There is therefore no special indication that once the Iron Curtain had fallen, it was clear enough that Simone's interwar activities would soon be regarded by the leadership of communist parties with great disfavour. Miles states that he has drawn on the French version of Karel Bartošek's *Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech* [Reports from Travels in the Communist Archives],³ but he still entirely leaves out the context of Katz's activity that Bartošek identifies in immense detail (affiliation with the French Communist Party, relationship to the Italian communist movement and so on). Here and there, we find a reference to a particular historical event, but it is rare for the author to "hit the target" in terms of dating and context. On top of that, the book contains a great many factual errors, which have evidently been taken over from the espionage reports, which tend to lack historical precision. The composition of the text is flat, with a lack of any kind of intellectual architecture. If the rationale of the work was to describe Katz's interwar and postwar activities in Europe and the United States, with its final outcome in his execution

2 *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag*, prepared by the World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, with an Introduction by Lord Marley. New York, A. A. Knopf 1933; in Czech: *Hnědá kniha o požáru Říšského sněmu a Hitlerově teroru*. Praha, Karel Borecký 1933.

3 BARTOŠEK, Karel: *Les aveux des archives: Prague-Paris-Prague, 1948-1968*. Paris, Seuil 1996; in Czech: *Zpráva o putování v komunistických archivech: Praha-Paříž (1948-1968)*. Praha, Paseka 2000.

in Prague, then this is obviously a story of the inevitable degradation and denial of former glory (both for Katz, and for the bold idea of International Communism). Unfortunately, because of a lack of differentiation and contrast between individual passages, not even the vigilant reader gets any impression of a drama mounting towards a denouement and the last act of Katz's life.

Otto Katz alias André Simone was a prominent figure in the international communist elite and one of its most widely travelled representatives. He therefore deserves much closer and deeper attention. It would undoubtedly be interesting to discover how far he was a victim of his own ambitions and how far of power intrigues inside the international communist movement. Unfortunately, Miles answers neither question, because – in fact – he does not even pose them.

The editing is of high quality in both publications. In Laurence's book, there are some rather surprising errors and oddities in the index, for example “železná opona” [Iron Curtain] is preceded by “Železná Ruda” [place name] and “Židé” [Jews], and Laurence's “dědeček” [grandfather] appears under the letter D, while his sister appears under the letter L [as Laurencová, Kate]. Given the quality of the prose in the original, translation of Miles's book was probably quite easy. On the other hand, it is surprising that the translator has taken over errors in official names from the original, e.g. “Český národní archiv” [Czech National Archive] instead of the correct name “Národní archiv” [National Archive], and that instead of Palais de Luxembourg (the Luxembourg Palace in Paris in the Luxembourg Gardens), we find the apparently original typo “Calais de Luxembourg” (which makes no sense, see p. 244). The text also presents contradictory facts in different passages, as when we read that Beneš formed a government on 4 April 1945 (p. 243), and two pages later a reference to “the communist-dominated government of Edvard Beneš, which was formed in May 1945,” (p. 245).

Comparison of the two publications leads, then, to surprising conclusions: Miles's book, which is painstakingly based on the intelligence reports of several important secret services, turns out to be less historically valuable than Laurence's literary treatment, which is strongly grounded in the reality of the period. While it cannot be claimed of either work that it offers new facts or should be essential reading for any specialist in contemporary Czechoslovak history, both are thought-provoking. One shows the unexpected potential of the narration of a historical story from a subjective perspective, and the other the pitfalls of trying to write a story without a strong interpretational line, for which transcriptions of inaccurate and misleading reports and summary documents of security services can be no substitute.

The Czech version of the article, entitled Ryze subjektivní biografie a meze “objektivních” pramenů. Tajné životy Jiřího Muchy a Otto Katze, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2013), pp. 456–460.

Review

Unreliable Elements, or the Object of Social Engineering in the Czech Borderlands?

David Kovařík

SPURNÝ, Matěj: *Nejsou jako my: Česká společnost a menšiny v pohraničí (1945–1960)* [They Are Not Like Us: Czech Society and Minorities in the Borderlands (1945–1960)]. Praha, Antikomplex 2011, 373 pp.

The transformation of the Czech borderlands and their population in the course of the twentieth century is a theme that has often appeared on bookshop counters in recent years, whether addressed in the form of academic literature, popular historical or polemic accounts, memoirs or even fiction. The fate of the German population continues to inspire a great deal of work and controversy, but there has also been growing interest in other ethnic or socio-cultural groups, whose members often moved to the border areas only after the end of the Second World War. One of the studies that have made a significant contribution to our knowledge of such groups is the latest book written by Matěj Spurný. Its title *Nejsou jako my* [They Are Not Like Us] does not, of course, express the author's attitude to minority communities. It is a reference to the argument of the time that the majority population and its political elites often exploited (and sometimes even exploit to this day) minorities in order to legitimise various forms of discrimination, to mask social conflicts or as a tool in political and power struggles.

Spurný's book on minorities in postwar Czechoslovakia is a revised version of his doctoral dissertation, but is also this young historian's third monograph.¹ It has had good reviews, enjoyed favourable reactions in the media and aroused considerable public interest. It went on to win its author the Otto Wichterle Prize awarded to young scholars for an exceptional published work. The book was published by the civic association Antikomplex, which Spurný helped to found.²

In the book under scrutiny, Matěj Spurný focuses on the years 1945–1960, a period in which the Czech lands, and especially the borderlands, experienced major migrations and transfers of population which fundamentally changed its ethnic and demographic map. This process of migration and transformation was integrally connected to the implementation of a postwar “purge of society,” which included serious and sometimes drastic effects on several minority communities branded to be, in the idiom of the time, a “population unreliable with regard to the state.” The intention was not just to inflict collective punishment on “enemies of the state,” but also to create an ethnically homogenous state of Czechs and Slovaks. It is against this background that Spurný's book seeks to identify the changing attitude of majority Czech society and its political elites to minority groups of population.³ To tackle this theme and for the purposes of analysis, Spurný chose what he defines as “three groups with very different boundaries that set them apart from majority society”: Germans who had not been transferred, Roma and Volhynian Czechs as “an example of the best organised and most compact group of re-emigrants” (p. 20).

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- 1 IDEM: *Flucht und Vertreibung: Das Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Niederschlesien, Sachsen und Nordböhmen*. Dresden, SLPB und Brücke/Most Stiftung 2008; IDEM: *Bijeme na poplach! Německá publicistika proti nacistickému nebezpečí (1930–1933)* [We Raise the Alarm! German Journalism against Nazi Threat (1930–1933)]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2009.
 - 2 He has also published a number of texts and contributed to books devoted to the Czech borderlands, their inhabitants and landscape. The word “Sudety” often appears in their titles. See e.g. MATĚJKA, Ondřej – MIKŠÍČEK, Petr – SPURNÝ, Matěj – SPURNÁ, Suzanne: *Zmizelé Sudety/Das Verschwundene Sudetenland* [Disappeared Sudeten]. Domažlice, Antikomplex – Nakladatelství Českého lesa 2003 (subsequent editions 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2008); SPURNÝ, Matěj (ed.): *Proměny sudetské krajiny* [Metamorphoses of the Sudeten Landscape]. Domažlice, Antikomplex – Nakladatelství Českého lesa 2006; MATĚJKA et al.: *Sudetské osudy* [Sudeten Fates]. Domažlice, Antikomplex – Nakladatelství Českého lesa 2006; SCHNEIDER, Miroslav – SCHOLL-SCHNEIDER, Sarah – SPURNÝ, Matěj: *Sudetské příběhy/Sudetengeschichten*. [Sudeten Stories]. Praha, Antikomplex – Institut für Bayerische und Schwabische Landesgeschichte der Universität Augsburg 2010.
 - 3 Spurný has also published some of his theories on this theme in various journals (see SPURNÝ, Matěj: Sudety – laboratoř budoucnosti: Poválečné vize směřování českého pohraničí [The Sudetenland – Laboratory of the Future: Postwar Visions of the Development of the Czech Borderlands]. In: *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 32, No. 6 (2010), pp. 14–17; IDEM: Očistěná společnost: Očista jako konstitutivní princip utváření poválečné české společnosti na příkladu českého pohraničí [Cleansed Society: Cleansing as the Constitutive Principle of the Formation of Postwar Czech Society on the Example of the Czech Borderlands]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2012), pp. 209–226.

Before embarking on the analysis of specific material, Spurný devoted considerable space to general questions and the theoretical rationale for research on the postwar Czech borderlands and the ethnic and socio-cultural minorities living there. As he explained in the introduction to the chapter “Czech Borderlands on the Threshold of a New Era,” his aim was not to offer a comprehensive account of the processes of resettlement and the emergence of a new society in the borderlands, but to identify the “mental world and social praxis” integrally bound up with these processes (Ibid.). For this purpose, he analysed the most important policy documents and regulations of the central organs and so provided a picture of the thinking of the top politicians and main “planners of the new borderland,” which he then went on to compare with the everyday praxis and actual events taking place in these regions. He also showed the gap between ideas and reality through an analysis of the period press and fiction (for example, the well-known “settler” novel *Nástup* [Succession] by Václav Řezáč) and by exploring how the propaganda of the time created an idealised picture of national-ethnic and socio-cultural transformations of the borderland.

Spurný devoted the biggest space to the German population, i.e. the decimated remnants that still remained on Czechoslovak territory, scattered throughout the borderlands and in the interior, after the postwar expulsion and subsequent deportation actions. In this case, his work was made easier by the abundance of existing literature and published archives, as well as soon-to-be-published archives on this topic.⁴ He made ample use of all this material, and usefully supplemented it with his own collection of material, for example, the testimony of witnesses and survey of selected periodicals of the time. On this basis, offering numerous examples of everyday practices, Spurný persuasively showed how “state policy” towards the Germans developed in the first postwar years and the period of building the communist dictatorship, moving from open discrimination, repression and attempts to expel as many Germans as possible, to the gradual search for a suitable model for their integration into Czechoslovakia’s majority society.

It is in relation to the residual German population that the author was most successful and persuasive in identifying the attitudes of state power and the majority society to his selected minorities. While at the central level the communist regime gradually turned away from nationalist and anti-German rhetoric and, in the course of time, also abandoned a discriminatory policy towards the German minority, at the lower level, among local functionaries but also among ordinary people, anti-German sentiments expressed in everyday interaction persisted for a very long time. Spurný showed this lasting animosity using specific and sometimes

4 The author often cites from a database from the yet unpublished edition project “Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945–1951” [“The Expulsion of the Germans and the Transformations of the Czech Borderlands 1945–1951”], edited by Adrian von Arburg and Tomáš Staněk. For more detail on this edition, see ARBURG, Adrian von – STANĚK, Tomáš (ed.): *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945–1951*, Vol. 1: *Češi a Němci do roku 1945. Úvod k edici* [Czechs and Germans up to 1945. Introduction to the Edition/Series]. Středokluky, Nakladatelství Milan Susa 2010.

even grotesque examples. One of the examples that he gave was the hysteria with which Czech citizens in the village of Braňany in North Bohemia reacted to a get-together organised for the German inhabitants by the local national committee (one outraged Czech Communist even threatened to turn in his party card – p. 215). Another involved the problems of a German employee (a former anti-fascist) of one concern located in Ústí nad Labem, who was forbidden to enter the works cafeteria and eat their with the other employees because of his “unreliability” – he eventually made a personal appeal to President Klement Gottwald to right this discrimination (p. 224).

In the chapter devoted to the Roma population, Spurný showed that in the first postwar years, the situation of Roma on Czechoslovak territory was in many respects similar to the position of the German population. However culturally and socially remote from one another, both communities suffered from the hostility of most of the majority Czech population, which was reflected in the attitude of the political elites and government. In the borderlands, this tendency found expression in pressure for the resettlement of both minorities from the region. While the Germans bore the stigma of enemies of the Czech nation, the war and Nazism, the ethnic Roma became a synonym for socially “inadaptable” and problematic people whose way of life and mentality prevented them from integrating into the new environment and creating a sense of solidarity with the other postwar settlers.

In addition, Matěj Spurný described how the new communist regime, especially in its early years, managed to tack inconsistently with regard to the minorities. For example, communist ideology exploited the Roma problem by using it to criticise the national-ethnic and social policy of interwar Czechoslovakia (the Roma as victims of the capitalist order of the so-called First Republic). On the other hand, in the 1950s, the official organs developed and encouraged a negative image of Roma, declaring them to be asocial and inadaptable elements. The country’s Security Services and central and local government authorities regarded the Roma (the same as the Germans) as “unreliable in relation to the state,” and one consequence, for instance, was that their residence close to the state border was considered to be undesirable. In the case of the Roma, it is uncertain whether this argument was genuinely motivated by fear concerning “state security” or was more just a pretext to rid the borderlands of this “troublesome element.”

Reading this chapter, we also realise, however, that the problems with the Roma population with which the government of the time was grappling, just like the multiple prejudices of majority society about the Roma, were much the same as those that we see today. One obvious example is the question of educating Roma pupils and specifically their placement in what was known as “special schools.” Similar efforts were made as early as the 1950s, as Spurný showed using the example of boarding schools for Roma children established at the time. The state authorities tried to use these schools to re-educate and “socialise” the Roma population, but while the schools were supposed to assist in their integration into society, they disrupted family bonds and often involved forcible separation of children from parents. Although the communist regime did not succeed in fully integrating the

Roma population or in getting rid of deep-rooted prejudices against the Roma, it eventually had some success in terms of partial adaptation, socialisation and improvement of the living standards of the Roma. The statement of an anonymous representative of the Roma community, quoted in the introduction to the book, is testimony to this improvement and its wider implications are worth considering: "The Communists turned us into human beings" (p. 9).

The part of the book dealing with Czech re-emigrants from Volhynia differs somewhat from the chapters devoted to the German and Roma populations. The inclusion of this group in a study dealing with minorities in the borderlands may even seem somewhat illogical, since the re-emigrants never claimed a special ethnic identity and were never officially recognised as a minority by the Czechoslovak state. Of course, Spurný is well aware of all this, but justifies his decision on the grounds that the Volhynian Czechs met the "main criteria characteristic of an ethnic minority" (p. 20) at least until the mid-1950s. The re-emigrants genuinely differed from the majority society in many respects, whether on the cultural level, religious affiliation, specific features of language and, in the case of the Volhynian Czechs, because of their strong anti-communism arising from their experience of life in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Volhynian Czechs were the largest group of postwar re-emigrants to have their own organisation and to publish their own journal. Spurný could again rely on abundant source material and make use of the existing research and a plethora of secondary literature, although in this case he has not exhausted all the possibilities.⁵

In my view, there is at least one problematic aspect in the conception of this chapter. The author tried to treat the fate of the Volhynian Czechs as at least partially representative of the fortunes of other re-emigrant groups and certainly linked with them, but while this is not in itself a bad idea, I am not convinced that Spurný chose a conceptually helpful approach. The passages on some other re-emigrant communities, such as the Viennese Czechs, Silesians or Rumanian Slovaks, often give the impression of having been inserted into the exposition rather randomly. For example, in the sub-chapter entitled "They Are Not Like Us: Nationalist and Ideological Themes of Distrust of Re-Emigrants," Spurný introduced the topic using the example of re-emigrants from Upper Silesia, Klodzko and Austria, but in other places, for instance in the sub-chapter "The KSČ [the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia] and the Volhynian Re-Emigrants," he focused only on the Volhynian Czechs, offering no comparison with the other groups of re-emigrants. This in itself raises doubts about the possibility of generalisation about the experiences of re-emigrants who differed so significantly in origin and collective history, including their relationship to state power and majority society.

5 As an example, I would mention the work of the ethnographer Jana Nosková, who conducted research among Volhynian Czechs using the biographical method. She came to conclusions similar to those of Matěj Spurný (see NOSKOVÁ, Jana: *Reemigrace a usídlování volyňských Čechů v interpretacích aktérů a odborné literatury* [The Re-Emigration and Settlement of the Volhynian Czechs in the Interpretations of the Actors and Academic Literature]. Brno, Ústav evropské etnologie 2007).

Matěj Spurný was not, however, trying to describe the history of two ethnic groups and one other social group in the Czech postwar borderlands in the traditional style usual in Czech historiography. His main aim was to explore the thinking and assumptions behind the behaviour of society at the time. He was not satisfied with the adumbration and reproduction of the content of the various normative directives issued by government authorities regarding the populations concerned and based on particular political-ideological and socio-cultural schemata, but he sought to identify how these norms were applied in everyday life and what results they had for the lives of the groups and individuals affected. Spurný effectively juxtaposed sources of different kinds and provenience, using a great many regional sources as well as documents from central archives, and in combination with study of contemporary press or literature and the testimony of witnesses, this allowed him to reconstruct a more three-dimensional picture of the past and to ground and illustrate it using specific examples and human lives. His book is thus an important and a unique contribution to the social history of postwar Czechoslovakia.

Reading Spurný's book compels us reflect critically on the legacy of the most pertinent act and symbol of ethnic cleansing in postwar Czechoslovakia, i.e. the transfer of the overwhelming majority of the German population out of the country after 1945. According to Spurný, the "cleansed" Czech borderlands were turned into a place where various state experiments were conducted: "In the Czech borderlands, the general enthusiasm at national victory legitimised what was (in comparison with the pre-Munich Republic), not only a far-reaching demographic but also a social and political change." He further writes: "In this sense, life in the borderlands was the *avant-garde* and a laboratory for the development of the state as a whole" (p. 47). This is likewise one of his main theses. The population in the borderlands thus became the object of "social engineering" and prototypes of "the new human being." This was particularly true for minorities and the author documented the approach above all in relation to the Roma. On the other hand, pressure arising from great ideological projects often had a shorter-term and less direct effect than the animosity from the side of majority Czech society that has already been mentioned above. Majority Czech society created a negative stereotype of each of the minorities concerned, influenced by tragic historical experience (Germans), rejection stemming from lack of adaption in behaviour and socio-cultural backwardness (Roma), or distrust for a relatively closed community and a different way of life (Volhynian Czechs).

Studying the three groups and their postwar fortunes naturally also enabled the author to form some general conclusions, and offer some general remarks and reminders concerning our recent history and the state of research into it. In the blurb on the back of the cover, the reader learns that the book provides "a new view on the beginnings of the socialist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia." Spurný did indeed challenge the traditional interpretation of Czechoslovak history, primarily by casting doubt on the idea of the communist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia as consisting of a "bad regime" on the one side and a "good society" on the other.

This model has until now been accepted and promoted by most historians, but Spurný suggests that, on the contrary, it was majority society, in its desire for “national cleansing” and tolerance for the violent approach associated with it often precisely with regard to minorities, that prepared the ground for the rise of the communist dictatorship, providing the new regime with legitimacy and giving it long-term support.

Using the example of the history of minorities, Spurný also tried to undermine the idea that 1948 was the major point of rupture in the development of Czechoslovakia, i.e. the point at which the country moved from democracy (even if imperfect and limited) to rigid communist totalitarianism.⁶ He harshly criticised the short period of the Third Republic (1945–1948), pointing out, for instance, that whereas in the Stalinist early 1950s the communist regime was responsible for the death of “only a few hundred to a thousand people, in the period before the communist takeover in February 1948, during what was still a partially democratic period, tens of thousands were dying for political reasons in Czechoslovakia” (p. 338).⁷

For this reason, Spurný’s book offers many new findings about the Czech borderlands and their inhabitants, but also has the potential to become a kind of “platform” for discussion on more general questions about Czech postwar history and the way it has been written. All the same, it will not escape the attentive reader that the book contains occasional errors of fact and inaccuracies. For example, it contains the mistaken claim that during the Second World War, Karel Kreibach, an important German functionary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia,

6 The year 1948 in relation to minorities, primarily Germans, was also the main theme of one panel at the conference entitled “Únor 1948 v Československu: Nástup komunistické totality a proměny společnosti” [“February 1948 in Czechoslovakia: The Rise of Communist Totalitarianism and Transformations of Society”], held on 25–26 February in Prague, and the associated articles in a collective monograph of the same title (see e.g. ARBURG, Adrian von: Únor 1948 – přelom v československé politice vůči Němcům? [February 1948 – a Turning Point in Czechoslovak Policy towards the Germans?]) In: KOCIAN, Jiří – DEVÁTÁ, Markéta (ed.): *Únor 1948 v Československu: Nástup komunistické totality a proměny společnosti* [February 1948 in Czechoslovakia: The Rise of Communist Totality and Changes of Society]. Praha, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2011, pp. 225–234). See also BRENNEROVÁ, Christiane: Cesta k únoru 1948: Teze k výzkumu soudobých dějin [The Road to February 1948. Thesis on Research in Contemporary History]. In: *Dějiny – teorie – kritika*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2006), pp. 215–230, especially pp. 228–230; DVOŘÁK, Tomáš: Bádání o německém obyvatelstvu v poválečném Československu, problémy jeho vymezení a širší kontextualizace [Research on the German Population in Postwar Czechoslovakia, Problems of Definition and Wider Contextualisation] In: ARBURG, Adrian von – DVOŘÁK, Tomáš – KOVAŘÍK, David: *Německy mluvící obyvatelstvo v Československu po roce 1945* [The German-Speaking Population in Czechoslovakia after 1945]. (Edice Země a kultura ve střední Evropě [Edition Countries and Culture in Central Europe], Vol. 15.) Brno, Matice moravská 2010, pp. 54–69.

7 Here the author refers primarily to the large number of victims of repressive measures against the Germans, and their “wild transfer” in the first postwar months. For more detail, see: Stanovisko Společné česko-německé komise historiků k odsunovým ztrátám [The Standpoint of the Joint Czech-German Commission of Historians on Losses in the Transfer]. In: *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1996), p. 602.

worked in the leadership of the party in Moscow (p. 164), when, in fact, he spent the war in Great Britain. It is also inaccurately stated that national committees and administrative commissions were established at the same time (p. 43). In reality, the dual existence of these bodies was impossible: the administrative commissions were formed and operated in the first postwar years instead of national committees in districts and communities with a majority of so-called “state unreliable” inhabitants (i.e. the Germans). The information about the borderland zone and its breadth of “roughly up to fifty kilometres from the state border” (p. 244) is dubious. It would have been advisable to supplement the information with reference to specific ordinances. In the course of the period in concern, there existed several “belts” around the state borders, but none were close to the stated fifty kilometres in breadth. The author was obviously thinking of the border belt established by a government decree in 1936 in line with the law on defence of the state; this interior line of the belt copied the external border of the seventy-seven border political districts, although its distance from the state border varied considerably.⁸

On top of that, I also have a few minor notes about the list of archival sources at the end of the book. The author conducted research in many archives, but they are not listed at the back in a unified way and their presentation is sometimes rather chaotic. In the case of the “Archive of the Security Services,” we are simply informed that this means the former Archives of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, but not a single fund studied there can be identified. In the case of the National Archives, specific funds are listed, but the funds “Ministry of the Interior – Nosek” and “Ministry of the Interior – Supplements” are identified by using incorrect and misleading abbreviations (AMV-N, or AMV-D), which were used earlier by the Archives of the Ministry of the Interior but have nothing to do with these particular funds. The “Office of the Prime Minister” (ÚPV) is cited imprecisely, because there are other funds under this title (for example, Routine Documents, Secret Documentation, Meetings of the Government and so on). However, these problems are more the fault of the editors than the author. Meanwhile the reader will certainly be pleased by the abundant period photographs that Spurný managed to find and gather in archives and private collections, but in a book on the borderland and ethnic minorities I would have liked not just photographs and period documents but some kind of a map showing the transformation of the ethnic composition of population in the region under scrutiny.

Yet, small shortcomings or minor reproaches for a few inaccuracies of fact and a less perfect final list of sources are of only little importance in the light of the tremendous quality of the book. What is more, in the growing body of books about the borderlands and its inhabitants, Spurný’s book is in many respects unique and

8 Government Decree No. 155/1936 of 25 June 1936 on the border belt and perimeter and other places important for the defence of the state (see ČAPKA, František – SLEZÁK, Lubomír – VACULÍK, Jaroslav: *Nové osídlení pohraničí českých zemí po druhé světové válce* [The New Settlement of the Borderlands of the Czech Lands after the Second World War]. Brno, CERM 2005, p. 11).

inspiring in its approach. This is because it uses the example of the minorities to throw light on the overall state, behaviour and thinking of the majority Czech society of the time, while at the same time offering a larger view forwards and back on more general questions of the whole postwar history of Czechoslovakia.

The Czech version of the article, entitled Nespolehlivé živly, anebo projekt sociálního inženýrství v českém pohraničí?, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 20, No. 1–2 (2013), pp. 182–189.

Review

About an End or a Beginning?

*Czech Historiography and Research
into the Final Phase of the Second World War*

Radka Šustrová

HRBEK, Jaroslav – SMETANA, Vít – KOKOŠKA, Stanislav – PILÁT, Vladimír – HOFMAN, Petr: *Draze zaplacená svoboda: Osvobození Československa 1944–1945* [Freedom Dearly Bought: The Liberation of Czechoslovakia 1944–1945], Vol. 1–2. Praha, Paseka 2009, 351 and 358 pp;

KOKOŠKA, Stanislav et al.: *Nultá hodina? Československo na jaře 1945 ve strategických souvislostech* [Zero Hour? Czechoslovakia in the Spring of 1945 in Strategic Contexts]. (Edice Prostopravdy, Vol. 2) Praha, Euroslavica – Nadační fond angažovaných nestraníků [Politically Engaged Non-Party Members Foundation] 2011, 256 pp.

Research into the last two years of the Second World War has been becoming popular with a range of historians.¹ The interest can be explained partly by the fact that the first years of the Second World War are relatively well covered in historiography. Another important factor behind the shift is that for many years

¹ This text is based partly on my already published review of the book *Freedom Dearly Bought* in the journal *Securitas Imperii*, Vol 17, No. 2 (2010), pp. 186–191.

now, historiographical mainstream has no longer been so intensely concerned with the history of Nazism, and has turned its attention to the genesis of communist dictatorship. Historians are now inclined to consider it much more necessary to explain the transition and connections between the two periods, for example in relation to the later fall of the Third Republic. The shift is not confined to Czech historiography. European and world historiography has been homing in on the turning-point years of 1944 and 1945, and the important but yet unmapped stories of these dramatic months. Making progress in this context is by no means a simple task, however, as Ian Kershaw found when writing his most recent work *The End: Hitler's Germany 1944–45*. He notes how he struggled with the question of how to incorporate all the multiple aspects of the fall of the Third Reich into one single book.² He defined his project as that of writing “an integral history of disintegration” in the period from the disembarkation of the allied troops in Normandy to the capitulation of Germany.³ Kershaw's book is not a military history – the kind of chronological, sober and detailed account of the movements of armies on the map of Europe that the title might suggest. He seeks to identify selected key questions via the dynamics and drama of the time, and thus to provide enough space to let the military operations unfold somewhere in the background of his narrative without entirely disappearing from his or the reader's field of vision. Kershaw's approach to the difficult task of mastering all this material in terms of method are of great relevance for Czechs, too, for it was not only the Third Reich that collapsed in the spring of 1945, but also the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Descriptions of the dramatic events of the last two years of the war have recently been reaching readers through work on a great variety of themes. Apart from the traditional military and political histories,⁴ we might mention topics from the field of social history, in which we can also include memoirs and ego-document editions.⁵ Expert works based on studies of witness accounts, with the emphasis on the

2 KERSHAW, Ian: *Das Ende: Kampf bis in den Untergang. NS-Deutschland 1944–45*. Bonn, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2011. Kershaw's book first came out in English under the title *The End: Hitler's Germany 1944–45*. London, Allen Lane 2011. A Czech translation has recently been published under the title *Konec: Německo 1944–45*. Brno: Jota 2013.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

4 As regards purely military histories, this group includes for example ZIMMERMANN, John: *Pflicht zum Untergang: Die deutsche Kriegführung im Westen des Reiches 1944/45*. Paderborn, Schöningh 2009; HOLLAND, James: *Italy's Sorrow: A Year of War, 1944–1945*. London, Harper 2008; MARTÍNEZ, Gil – MANUEL, Eduardo: *Espanoles en las SS y la Wehrmacht 1944–45: La unidad de izquierda en la batalla de Berlin*. Madrid, Almena 2011. A view of events in the Pacific is offered for example by HAMMEL, Eric M.: *Islands of Hell: The U.S. Marines in the Western Pacific, 1944–1945*. Minneapolis, Zenith 2010.

5 Examples of this group include PRITCHARD, Gareth: *Niemandland: A History of Unoccupied Germany, 1944–1945*. New York, Cambridge University Press 2012; SCHRIJVERS, Peter: *Liberators: The Allies and Belgian Society 1944–1945*. New York, Cambridge University Press 2009. The situation on the home front, everyday life of the civilian population and work deployment of women in the last months of the war are subjects considered for example in UEBERSCHÄR, Gerd R. – MÜLLER, Rolf-Dieter: *1945: Das Ende des Krieges*. Darmstadt,

bombardment or transfer of the German population, have also found their place.⁶ Last but not least, significant attention has been paid to the theme of concentration camps and their liberation.⁷ In some cases, different themes and approaches have been combined and connected.

It is quite hard to say where Czech research on the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia at the end of its existence, or more broadly in the last years of the war, has been going to. Czech historians, as will become clear below, tend to cling for dear life to classic military and political and by extension diplomatic history, which tells stories of the gradual conquest of territory under alien rule, and therefore almost exclusively features political and military elites as the “makers of history.”⁸ Czech historiography of the Second World War has hence tended to ignore the full range of topics mentioned above. We should not, of course, be tempted into thinking

Primus 2005; SZEPESI, Eva: *Ein Mädchen allein auf der Flucht: Ungarn – Slowakei – Polen (1944–1945)*. Berlin, Metropol 2011.

- 6 See e.g. FUCHS, Anne: *After the Dresden Bombing: Pathways of Memory, 1945 to the Present*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2012; FISCHER, Henning: “Erinnerung” an und für Deutschland: *Dresden und der 13. Februar 1945 im Gedächtnis der Berliner Republik*. Münster, Westfälisches Dampfboot 2011.
- 7 See STRZELECKI, Andrzej: *Ewakuacja, likwidacja i wyzwolenie KL Auschwitz*. Oświęcim, Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau 2008; ELLGER, Hans: *Zwangsarbeit und weibliche Überlebensstrategien: Die Geschichte der Frauenaußenlager des Konzentrationslagers Neuengamme 1944–45*. Berlin, Metropol 2007; LIEDKE, Karl: *Das KZ-Außenlager Schillstraße in Braunschweig 1944–1945*. Braunschweig, Appelhaus 2006; ERPEL, Simone: *Zwischen Vernichtung und Befreiung: Das Frauen-Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück in der letzten Kriegsphase*. Berlin, Metropol 2005.
- 8 Czech historiography has been taking up the generally less covered period of 1944–1945 with very variable intensity and only time will tell whether the publication of *Freedom Dearly Bought and Zero Hour?* will turn out to be just exceptions proving the rule. Among monographic treatments of this period published earlier, see for example NESVADBA, František (ed.): *Osvobození Československa Rudou armádou 1944–1945* [The Liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army 1944–1945], Vol. 2. Praha, Naše vojsko 1965; SLÁDEK, Oldřich: *Ve znamení smrtihlava: Nacistický protipartyzánský aparát v letech 1944–1945* [Under the Sign of the Death’s Head: The Nazi Anti-Partisan Apparatus in the Years 1944–1945]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1991; KOKOŠKA, Stanislav: *Praha v květnu 1945: Historie jednoho povstání* [Prague in May 1945: The History of an Uprising]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2005; VESELÝ, Martin: *Hvězdy nad Krušnohořím: Letecká válka nad severozápadními Čechami (1944–1945)* [Stars above the Krušné Mountains: Air War above North-West Bohemia (1944–1945)]. Praha, Naše vojsko 2005. One important and essential account of the last days of the Protectorate is KÜPPER, René: *Karl Hermann Frank (1898–1946): Politická biografie sudetoněmeckého nacionálního socialisty* [Karl Hermann Frank (1898–1946): A Political Biography of a Sudeten German National Socialist]. Praha, Argo 2012. Rather geographically remote from Protectorate territory are two works about the fallen at Dunkerque: MARŠÁLEK, Zdenko – HOFMAN, Petr: *Dunkerque 1944–1945: Ztráty Československé samostatné obrněné brigády během operačního nasazení ve Francii* [The Losses of the Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade during Operational Deployment in France]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2011; PLACHÝ, Jiří: *Kříže a hvězdy od Dunkerque: Černá kniha Čs. samostatné obrněné brigády 1944–1945* [Crosses and Stars from Dunkerque: The Black Book of the Czech Independent Armoured Brigade 1944–1945]. Cheb, Svět křidel 2011.

that the absence of this diversity means that Czech historiography is in some fatal crisis. Political and military history, like cultural, social or economic history, can offer a range of attractive questions and even more interesting answers. How far have the authors of the two books reviewed in the presented text – *Zero Hour* and *Freedom Dearly Bought* – managed to exploit this potential?⁹

At first glance, the two books are connected by an overlap in the teams of authors. Both are part of the output of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; the first is the result of a grant project, and the second was inspired by a seminar marking the 65th anniversary of May 1945, also organised by the Institute for Contemporary History, this time in collaboration with the Foundation Fund of the Politically Engaged Non-Party Members.¹⁰ *Freedom Dearly Bought* is conceived as a unified and chronologically ordered text, divided into individual volumes, headings and chapters. Its authors focus primarily on questions of the role played by the territory of Czechoslovakia in the strategic plans of the Allies and in the victorious campaign against Nazi Germany, and on how the future of Czechoslovakia was planned in the interactions between the government-in-exile and the ideas of the victorious powers. *Zero Hour?* contains six separate essays that are linked by only two aspects – the time horizon of spring 1945 and the theme of Czechoslovakia. Unlike the first publication, it is supplemented by texts from the seminar and selected edited documents.

One can discern three clear thematic lines to which the authors have kept in both publications. The first is the purely military historical aspect, with the operations of armies at its centre. In the second place, the authors have tried to describe events on the field of politics or diplomacy. Finally, in the third place, they are interested in the situation in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia towards the end of its existence.

It is no exaggeration to say that the military aspects of the liberation of Czechoslovakia are central to both books: in *Freedom Dearly Bought* more than three hundred pages are devoted to them (overall almost one entire volume), and four out of the six essays deal with the issue in *Zero Hour?*. The authors of these chapters are above all Jaroslav Hrbek, followed by Stanislav Kokoška, Zdenko Maršálek, Petr Hofman and Vladimír Pilát. Jaroslav Hrbek, one of the main authors of the two-volume

9 We should add that the authors of *Freedom Dearly Bought* themselves characterise this collective monograph as a supplement to the synthesis in the series *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české* [History of the Lands of the Bohemian Crown] from the Paseka Publishing House (Volumes XVa and XVb) written by Jan Kuklík and Jan Gebhart (Vol. 1, p. 10), and on this basis justify the absence of some themes (e.g. social history). The fact remains, however, that the publication under review was based on a grant-funded project entitled “The Liberation of Czechoslovakia,” which ran in the years 2002–2004, while the two-volume synthesis came out only after this project was completed, i.e. in the years 2006 and 2007.

10 The seminar “Květen 1945 v českých zemích: Vojenské a politické aspekty osvobození Československa” [“May 1945 in the Czech Lands: Military and Political Aspects of the Liberation of Czechoslovakia”] took place on 17 May 2010 at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague.

work and also the author of the opening study in *Zero Hour?*, has tried to present an extremely detailed account of the military themes of the last war months in Europe. In these texts, he combines what is on the one hand a very general view of the development of the Second World War on European territory, and by extension the North-African theatre of war, with a detailed description of the situation in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine and the unsuccessful attempt to liberate Slovakia in 1944 on the other. Hrbek conceives most of his contributions so broadly that the reader often finds it quite difficult to make out central Czechoslovak themes in them. Especially in describing the strategic situation in Europe in 1944 (*Freedom Dearly Bought*, Chapter 5), where Hrbek concentrates on events in North Africa and the Balkans, Central Europe seems to vanish wholly from the author's horizon. The reader gets the impression that the author is mentally advancing towards Berlin rather than towards Prague. Presenting details of the Slovak National Uprising as one of the key military events at the close of the war is certainly justified and also offers the author the chance for deeper analysis, but the passages on the uprising in Slovakia (Chapter 11) and the Carpathian Dukla Operation (Chapter 12) are mostly just a march-past of strategic plans and military operations in which, with few exceptions, the author seems to have more or less given up on the task of historical interpretation.

Hrbek's short introductory essay in *Zero Hour?*, entitled "The End of the Second World War in Europe," (only included in the book by later decision of the publishers, it was not linked to the original conception of the seminar) is similar in its very general perspective. In form of treatment, it is likewise rather distant from the other studies, which are more in the nature of case studies. While Stanislav Kokoška in his essay "Lost Victory: The Operations of American Units on Czech Territory" supplements the analysis of American military operations in the last phase of the war presented by Jaroslav Hrbek and Vladimír Pilát in *Freedom Dearly Bought* (Chapter 22), Zdenko Maršálek's study "Soldiers in the Power of Politicians: The Czechoslovak Army in the Spring of 1945" is one of the few to bridge the chasm between a copious description of events on the fronts and the Czechoslovak Question in the space allowed by the format. Indeed, Maršálek focuses on the conflict of military and political interests using the example of the deployment of a Czechoslovak military unit alongside the American troops in the advance into the Western part of Czechoslovakia. Apart from the creation of the Czechoslovak military units (including the problem of recruiting soldiers, the extent to which this was voluntary and other personnel matters), he considers the origin, formation and activity of the Combined Division, which was the first Czechoslovak military unit to enter Czech territory. The author thus suggests the importance of the part played by Czechoslovak units in the liberation of their homeland both for political elites and for the soldiers themselves, and makes a positive assessment of the effects of their mission on the population of the liberated territory.

Petr Hofman's chapter, "In the Shadow of Liberation," opens up an interesting theme with an account of the activities of Soviet repressive organs on Czechoslovak territory in the years 1944 and 1945, especially the arrest of former Russian and

Ukrainian emigrants. Jan Němeček's study, "In the Soviet Embrace: The President and Government in Liberated Košice," dealing with the isolation of the Czechoslovak leadership in Eastern Slovakia from the representatives of the Western governments and the very authoritarian behaviour of the Soviet side, also adds to what is a new perspective, at least in part. However, in both publications, diplomatic history is overwhelmingly represented in chapters written by Vít Smetana.

Smetana is also the author of the introductory overview section in *Freedom Dearly Bought* (Prologue), where he recapitulates the diplomatic-political negotiations of the years 1939–1943 and reminds us of the constitutional evolution, successes and failures of the Czechoslovak exile representation in London. The mentioned prologue ends with the signing of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Alliance Agreement in December 1943, which all authors consider one of the most fundamental events for subsequent developments. In other sections, Smetana traces the fortunes of the government-in-exile in London in the labyrinth of diplomatic negotiations with its Western counterparts, in the course of which the Czechoslovak side was already finding itself under strong pressure from Moscow. In contrast to established conventional interpretations of Beneš's role in the liberation process, the author offers a different view of this central protagonist of the Czechoslovak government in London. Beneš, as presented by Smetana, was a politician who failed to correctly assess the situation when negotiating with the highest French and British and above all with the Soviet leaders, or in his more backroom capacity as head of the Czechoslovak resistance abroad. Smetana highlights his naivety and illusions in relation to the Soviet Union. Above all, however, Smetana's interpretation supports the theory of Czechoslovak-Soviet convergence as early as the war years and the autonomous Czechoslovak choice of the path of socialism. Smetana considers essentially identical questions in *Zero Hour?*, but this time seeks to offer a more summarising account. In his essay, entitled "National Mythology between East and West: Seven Stories about Czechoslovakia in 1945 in the Light of the Sources," he uses archival research to challenge conventional myths about the second (this time postwar) and allegedly previously agreed "betrayal" of Czechoslovakia by the Western great powers.

The diplomatic history is supplemented by a brief, but for the purposes of a balanced content very important, piece by Petr Hofman, summing up the activities and ideas of the communist exiles on the future development on the liberated territory (*Freedom Dearly Bought*, Chapter 2). In contrast to the outlined military and political contexts, events in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia are a somewhat marginal theme in the text; in fact, it is discussed in a more substantial way at the very end of the book – in chapters on the situation of the home resistance in the spring of 1945 and the May Uprising (Chapters 20 and 21). In the latter, Stanislav Kokoška describes both the gradual spread of disturbances and unconstrained expressions of sympathy for the liberation process, and the attack of German units on Prague. Probably because he sees the May Uprising as an "important factor that speeded up the liberation of the Czech Lands" (Vol. 2, p. 190), Kokoška does not regard it necessary to pay detailed attention to the Protectorate government

in the last months of the war. The Protectorate is thus reduced just to Resistance groups and the culmination of revolutionary ideas projected onto the May Uprising. Neither of the books reviewed in this text presents the process of the liberation of Czechoslovakia up to the Prague Uprising as having any very deep connection with Protectorate territory, except insofar as that territory was an object of military strategic and diplomatic games.

Zero Hour? gives the impression of being a kind of supplement to the earlier two-volume piece of work quite obviously targeted at more demanding readers. The studies by Zdenko Maršálek or Petr Hofman (and the printing of documents) therefore fit the book well even though they certainly deserve broader attention that they might have attracted had they been included in *Freedom Dearly Bought*. The two books turn out to be linked not by Kershaw's theme of end or fall, but by the clearly emerging outlines of a new beginning. However, the interpretations offered are rather simple because neither publication considers the destruction of the Protectorate as a subject and both concentrate on external processes, above all on diplomatic negotiations. The Protectorate and its population appear in the authors' field of vision only in connection with the final battles of the war and the operations of military units on its territory. The authors generally agree that at the least from 1943, a strong pro-Soviet orientation of the government-in-exile set Czechoslovakia on its way to the embrace of the Soviet Union and so pre-figured both its immediate postwar and longer-term development in the direction of communist dictatorship.

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Review

The “Golden Era” or Only a “Sweet Intermezzo” of Czech Sociology?

Miloslav Petrušek

Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Republika sociologů: Zlatá éra české sociologie v meziválečném období a krátce po druhé světové válce* [The Republic of Sociologists: The Golden Era of Czech Sociology in the Interwar Period and Shortly after the Second World War]. Praha, Scriptorium 2011, 308 pp.

There are, indeed, texts that cannot be written by a large team of authors as they cannot make a wide and sometimes a too factual material base, with its necessary historical and subject structure, compact and coherent. Keeping this in mind, one can say that Nešpor's book is an example of how one author managed to combine both requirements for a historical-sociological study and, consequently, offers his readers a text we have not yet had at our disposal: an almost complete history of Czech sociology of the “First Republic” overlapping into the 1960s, with minor reminiscences of the period when we “suffered” under the two-headed eagle. None of this is superfluous; nothing disrupts the structure of the text. The work has a substantial number of references and footnotes, which not only demonstrates the author's erudition, but is also an immense scholarly performance that allows us to orientate ourselves in a subject that is anything but simple or easy to understand.

As a matter of fact, there is nothing easier than to look for small “mistakes” and omissions in such a synthetic book which has, moreover, maintained a tolerable length. Not that I think they do not exist, but, even though I read the book in detail, I did not discover them. On the other hand, I can argue with the author about various concepts and the characters chosen that are described and analysed in the text; however, I can do little against the “heavy artillery” of his knowledge. Nor have I any intention of doing so.

I have two preliminary remarks that can serve as an introduction to the topic: the term “golden era” is used in the very subtitle of his book; yet, the twenty years between 1920 and 1940 were, in many respects, not just a period of “paradigmatic” strivings, but also of personal grudges, which shattered the not very strong Czech (indeed Czechoslovak) science of sociology. Nešpor states that the Masaryk Czech Sociological Society had 37 members and 38 candidates in 1930, almost 80 in 1931 (by way of comparison, in 1969, before the cleansing, the Czechoslovak Sociological Society had more than 600 members). In retrospect, the author is right, of course, as all the disputes occurred without the risk of institutional sanctions. What followed after 1948 (or maybe even a little before that), was a struggle not only for the institutional salvage of sociology, an often personal struggle associated with existential risk in any case, but it was also, perhaps, about the very right to existence of sociology outside the academic arena.

The second remark is of a more serious nature. The author concludes his book with a perfectly legitimate observation: “To the question as to what Czech pre-Marxist sociology gave the ‘world,’ with sociology understood in a world-wide perspective, one can answer somewhat succinctly: practically nothing at all.” If this is really the case, then the question arises as to what sense there is in reconstructing the history of a field that lived in the “home backyard” for the most part and from which it did not step out too much. The author partly answers the question himself when he argues that the new republic “needed sociology,” not least in the Masaryk sense – sociologists were to conduct research, get to know things and be socially active, sharing the Masaryk principle (which was fundamentally Comte’s conception) that sociology needs to be aware in order to predict and, on that basis, also suggest how to “improve the state of society.” This was a concept, functional no doubt and, at the same time, extremely ambitious, but it likewise bounded sociology with (social) policy which was also somewhat dangerous – for sociology as a scientific discipline *par excellence*. In fact, however, only a limited number of sociologists shared the Masarykian guiding principle. Thus, strictly speaking, this is actually a history of one “unfortunate field,” which itself was subject to internal decay because of senseless personal frictions, or – and this is more important – shared the fate of sociology in all of the totalitarian regimes in which the “golden era” finally resulted. Let us add, though, that a number of sociologists completed solid analyses of the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s; nevertheless, their warnings were a voice crying in the wilderness.

The Soviet Union put an end to sociology in roughly the mid-1920s. The last significant text, which highlighted the “parallel and complementary views” of sociology and history, was that of Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin written in 1921. He even dared to

admit that modern bourgeois sociology offered a lot of interesting observations. Even though the book was also published in English under the ambitious title *The Sociologist System* in 1925, it was the last time sociology tuned to “related areas” – ethnography, history, social psychology and so on. It was, therefore, logical that in countries which deviated from the path of Soviet socialism, sociology had to simply disappear: this was the fate of Czech sociology as well. The Nazis, for their part, did not dismiss sociology as such; nevertheless, it did not exist in reality either – it let live doyens such as Ferdinand Tönnies, Werner Sombart and Alfred Weber; while Alfred Rosenberg, Carl Schmitt, philosophers and sociologists of the so-called Conservative Revolution and the like also took a leading role. At the same time, they expelled all of those who formed the intellectual potential of modern society – the Frankfurt School, Hannah Arendt and many more. In contrast, the fate of Italian sociology was somewhat different. Additionally, Spanish sociology at the time of Franco did not publish a single intellectual product that might be worth mentioning. Moreover, it is likewise well known that Augusto Pinochet put an end to all sociological work in the early weeks of his authoritarian regime. The explanation is simple – sociology is (generally speaking) a “critical consciousness” (not necessarily “left-wing”), it is a mirror that society sets in place to expose its flaws – and totalitarian regimes do not tolerate any defects on their path to bright tomorrows (or even to the domination of the world).

Those chapters of Nešpor’s book that focus on the sad period when sociology “was and was not” under the Protectorate, certainly belong among the most interesting. Making use of a great deal of material, they show how sociology lived its “pseudo-life” with a somewhat friendly permission on the part of the Protectorate authorities on the one hand, and how, on the other hand, those who really represented the field did not agree with even the most moderate form of collaboration. Sociology then had a Janus-like face – and this was to be repeated two more times (after February 1948 and again after 1970). Of course, in such external conditions the hidden internal face of those who were parasitic on the institutional existence of the field survived – they adapted themselves, they conducted pseudo-research and they even stole.

This certainly does not answer the question as to why one should write about the history of a field that did not contribute to world science in any way (or almost in any way). First, let us present an indirect, but strong enough argument. “Little sociologies,” as far as I know, write their own history and behave towards their intellectual heritage with respect. From our perspective, Polish sociology seems quite large or medium-sized (and that is indeed the case today); however, it was not so in the past. Apart from Florian Znaniecki, who however gained his name and fame at the time when he was in America, Polish sociology actually had no great personality. And yet, monographs (and anthologies) of authors such as Jack Abramowicz, Stefan Czarnowski, the husband and wife team Stanisław and Mary Ossowski, Ludwíg Gumplowicz (who was, at the same time, likewise a major Austrian sociologist) and others are being published. In addition, Russian sociology, as a result of the tragic political hiatus, also did not belong among the “great sociologies”; nevertheless, there are at least ten monographs on the history of Russian sociology as well as reprints

of pre-revolutionary “classics” (Maksim M. Kovalevsky, Nikolai I. Karejev, Nikolai K. Mikhailovsky, etc.). Obviously, the effort to prove that Russian social sciences were not always “backward, behind the West” plays a role even though that was indeed the case, at least in the first two decades of the 20th century. And it is similar with the efforts of Romanian sociologists and likewise the Hungarians. Slovak sociology, for its part, attempts to reconstruct its own history, i.e. a history less dependent on the “Czechoslovak” context.

The second reason is of a cultural-historical nature: the history of sociology is an organic part of cultural history because it informs us (with whatever degree of adequacy) and provides (no matter how accurately) a picture of the life of society both as a whole and its segments – the countryside, the city, unemployment, poverty, social mobility and so on. Nowadays, at the time of controversy about “national identity” in the context of globalisation trends, the history of a social science field represents an important contribution to the topic. We cannot speculate or enthuse about national identity while making use only of Anglo-Saxon literature; we need to rely on our own source base and look for the general picture there. And this is exactly what Nešpor’s book does – though not in a declamatory and demonstrative manner.

There are two positive characteristics about Nešpor’s book: first, it is very readable because it does not avoid the drama and strife within Czech sociology, even the *batrachomyomachia* that had fallen into oblivion; and secondly, he is as objective as a sociologist-human being can be. At times it seems that he is too kind (although not uncritical); yet, Nešpor adheres to the principle that without archival or other documents, one cannot condemn people *a priori* because it seems to be the tradition to do so (the case of Jan Mertl, Antonín Vaněk and Karel Galla *pars pro toto*). Nešpor’s objectivity is also reflected in the fact, which may paradoxically give the impression of some sort of bias, that from the “famous” sociologists of the Prague and Brno Schools he separates a specific stream of Christian sociology and, in addition, a group of “marginal” figures, i.e. individuals who began their work with a great start, but did not bring it to completion or were forced to terminate it prematurely (Antonín Uhlíř, Bruno Zwicker). In the case of *Christian sociology*, we learn, for the first time systematically, about this sociological current that was influential in its time, but which also, of course, was unloved by “profane” sociology. Nešpor is, furthermore, critical of Marxist “sociological efforts” – Marxists, as a matter of fact, did not publish anything noteworthy during the “golden era,” even though they may have actually tried to do so. Svoboda’s information about Soviet sciences in the 1930s is almost completely “off-topic” and the fate of Václavek is tragic not only because his life ended in Auschwitz but also on account of his unfortunate attempt to link the sociological view of literature with the doctrine of Socialist Realism. Kurt Konrad can be found among the sociological “marginals” and, in a way, Julius Fučík with his “literary trilogy” as well. On the other hand, Nešpor is very decent towards those Marxists who made up for their infatuation with ideology in the 1950s with their later scholarly work.

There is no point recapitulating the whole book – therefore let us emphasise one more time that the work in question is factually extremely rich, but certainly not

tedious, even though I could perhaps make a few marginal comments. I fully agree with the author that Josef Ludvík Fischer considered himself more a philosopher and understood his sociology as a “by-product” of his philosophising. On the other hand, even though Fischer viewed philosophy as the “queen of sciences,” his own philosophical work is not exactly inspiring (moreover, Fischer stopped reading contemporary literature at one point – see his contribution to the *Malý sociologický slovník* [A Little Sociological Dictionary]). Paradoxically, his book *Krise demokracie* [Crisis of Democracy] is of greater importance; it is a sociologically “exemplary” work that is even prescient.

The weakening of the contentions between the Prague and Brno Schools can be considered very beneficial, too. Although it is a label we can hardly get rid of, we know – and Nešpor’s book offers instructions on how to do so – it was not a simple competition between the two hostile camps, but actually a real “paradigmatic” dispute. Moreover, the author deals extremely discreetly with Masaryk’s followers many of whom plagiarised and moralised rather than actually conducted sociological research of their own. He likewise devotes adequate attention to the solitary Emanuel Chalupný, whose ambitious attempt to create a sociological “system” certainly was not successful, but had one special advantage: because of Chalupný’s diligence we can still find a large amount of specific material in his “pseudo-synthesis” that can be used for historical comparison. In addition, I am convinced that at least one paragraph should have dealt with Masaryk’s biography written by Zdeněk Nejedlý – his understanding of Masaryk’s *Sebevražda* [Suicide], and also of the Herbartists, was extremely insightful (which does not absolve him of his later guilt, nor his earlier guilt). Last but not least, in the indicative list of Masaryk’s biographers, the author omitted the current grandiose attempt of Stanislav Polák to create a “new biography” as a kind of opposition to Nejedlý based on the newest factual material (if I am not mistaken, four volumes have been published but without much response). Maybe even Emanuel Rádl deserved more attention than a mere footnote because, on top of his general methodological reflections, he wrote penetrating studies about Czech-German relations as well as about the philosophy (*implicite* sociology) of National Socialism.

And finally – for the first time we have in our hands “a Czech history of Slovak sociology,” written objectively with strong and soundly-based arguments. Alexandr Hirner receives appropriate awards as well as Štefánek’s sociography of Slovakia.

Perhaps readers of this review may reach the conclusion that the evaluation of the book is too positive. Therefore, there is only one way to convince oneself of the merits of Nešpor’s book, which manages to combine historical perspective, archival experience and extraordinary diligence with sociological understanding – by reading it.

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Review

Scientific Revolutions and Political Attitudes

Jan Mervart

SOMMER, Vítězslav: *Angažované dějepisectví: Stranická historiografie mezi stalinismem a reformním komunismem (1950–1970)* [Engaged Historiography: Party Historiography between Stalinism and Reform Communism (1950–1970)]. Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny – Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy 2011, 508 pp.

Writing about Vítězslav Sommer's *Angažované dějepisectví* [Engaged Historiography] poses certain difficulties for me. First of all, the book has become a "classic" of its genre and an established part of Czech contemporary historiography only shortly after its publication. Secondly, I am of the same generation as the author and have personal ties with him that go beyond ordinary collegiality. This means first that there is no point in my recapitulating the contents of the book, because they are already well-known, and second that I am inhibited from any eulogistic passages about the ground-breaking character and other merits of the monograph. I doubt that I shall be able to avoid either of these pitfalls entirely, but I shall try to offer some thoughts on questions concerning Sommer's methodological starting-points in *Angažované dějepisectví*, and also with Czech reformism and its sources.

Sommer's willingness to take party historiography seriously, and not see it as a mere political or propagandist tool, or perhaps the mere by-product of political

propaganda, means that his text can be read on at least two levels: as a study of a by no means negligible segment of Czech postwar historiography with overlaps into the history of the humanities in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist period, and, at the same time, as the story of party intellectuals involved in the creation of the socialist dictatorship in the late 1940s and 1950s, then in its mild subversion and, last but not least, in reform of the existing socialist model at the end of the 1960s. At this point, I suppose that I must mention a third interpretation, which regards Sommer's work as the promotion of communist historiography.¹ The trouble is that the *a priori* assumption of the *unscientific nature* of a particular theme is so normative that there is no real way or point in arguing with it; paradoxically, the position recalls arguments from the time that Sommer terms the first phase of party historiography. In any case, in this context, I regard it as proper to say that I consider Sommer's book an exceptional achievement on both the first two levels mentioned.

Vítězslav Sommer does not conceive of historiography as "pure" science with its own "exclusive history," but under the influence of social constructivism of Bruno Latour (especially his *Science in Action*), he regards it primarily as a socially conditioned organism that cannot be interpreted apart from the context of the social and institutional situation of its protagonists. Inspired by some Anglophone work on Soviet historiography and the intelligentsia (Sheila Fitzpatrick, Roger D. Markwick), Sommer also uses the concept of scientific revolutions as a *paradigm shift* as formulated by the American philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn. He thus defines three basic stages of party historiography in the form of Stalinist, post-Stalinist and reformist historiography, and then – on the basis of study of an extensive and little used set of archival and printed materials from each stage – he describes how each was constituted and then how one paradigm stage was replaced by the next. Sommer introduces readers to half-forgotten texts and historiographical disputes but also provides a picture of the institutional development of postwar party historiography and the social hinterland of the historians of the time.

The tracing of the *paradigm shifts* of party historiography undoubtedly offers a framework for a functional grasp of the subject chosen, and from the point of view of contemporary Czech historiography, the resulting picture is both acceptable

1 Václav Veber offers this interpretation in a review of Sommer's book together with the Slovak historian Adam Hudek's *Najpolitickéjšia veda: Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948–1968* [The Most Political Science: Slovak historiography 1948–1958] (Bratislava, Historický ústav SAV 2010) in the journal *Securitas Imperii*, No. 21 (2), 2012, pp. 254–258. For anyone who wonders whether the claim cited in the text might not be taken out of context, I quote Veber's concluding judgment: "Throughout the work, the author pretends to be an unprejudiced and disinterested scholar, but the very choice of theme and his way of treating it suggests altogether clearly that communist historiography is very congenial to him and that he has no qualms about promoting it. This seems very anachronistic to me today, but it draws attention to the fact that communism has a very resistant life and constantly comes back in unexpected form. Of course, this is not a pleasant message, but in this sense the work is useful, for it is a warning against what can happen." (*Ibid.*, p. 258)

and innovative. All the same, when reading a book about “engaged historiography,” I could not resist asking a number of questions. Not to beat about the bush, these may be summed up as questions about the mutual influence and effects of science and politics on the one hand and questions about the individual paradigm shifts on the other.

Sommer is very well aware of the tight connection between politics (political practice as well as ideology) and party historiography and acknowledges its significance for the whole twenty-year period under scrutiny. He often presents explicit accounts of the political thinking of historians, whether in the context of the Stalinist definition of science, the shaking of faith in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia around the year 1956 or the era of the formation of the reformist programme of the 1960s. In the passages where he explains paradigm shifts, however, he focuses almost exclusively on the texts of the period, and although he emphasises political connections, I cannot completely rid myself of the feeling that, ultimately, he is attributing the decisive impulses for the replacement of one paradigm by another to historiographical production itself. Sommer’s much avowed starting-point is the social study of historiography; yet, in my view, the analysis of the texts of the period rather seduces him into over-estimating the nature of party historiography as an autonomous scientific/academic discipline and underestimating the immanent tension between its political and scientific functions. I believe that to gain a deeper understanding of the intellectual world of Sommer’s protagonists, there is above all a need to emphasise this internal contradiction, in which I think political conviction had the upper hand over scholarly ambitions. Incidentally, I consider that this interpretation applies for Stalinist, post-Stalinist and reformist historiography, and for the later involvement of some former party historians in the activities of the dissident movement or of the political exile.² Of course, the same as Sommer, I would not seek to separate politics from the scholarship, but what interests me is an assessment of the ratio, which – as I shall try to show – varies in ways that are far from negligible.

My questioning is not intended to be a challenge to Sommer’s periodisation of the “three phases,” but is nevertheless directed to the issue of how far we are really dealing with a shift of scientific paradigms (or scientific revolutions) and how far with a shift in the political attitudes of the representatives of party historiography. When Sommer defines the different stages of party historiography, we may wonder whether the transition from one stage to another was not more a matter of changes in the political thinking of members of the apparatus of the Central Committee of the KSČ [the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], under the direction of which the Institute of History of the KSČ [Ústav dějin KSČ] just like the Party (later Political) University then fell, than of intellectual complications and contradictions in the existing scientific view and the understanding of the world derived from it.

2 One striking example of such a cross-over is the career of former party historian Karel Bartošek and his authorial share in the *Černá kniha komunismu* [Black Book of Communism].

How, for example, can we explain the patently different development of party historiography and institutional philosophy? How is it possible that at the time of the campaign against the revisionist “deviations” of Karel Kosík, Ivan Sviták and Ladislav Tondl in the late 1950s, Czech party historiography was more or less conformist? One certainly cannot answer by arguing that one discipline was essentially more tributary to the party line and the other more speculative. In the Marxist-Leninist conception, historiography was a part of historical materialism and philosophy part of dialectical materialism, but both these disciplines had originally formed solid pillars of Stalinist science as an instrument for knowledge of reality and its revolutionary transformations. Is the answer not to be found more in the fact that the great majority of protagonists of party historiography were not among the ordinary party members, like the philosophers or communist writers, but belonged to the nomenklatura apparatus of the Central Committee of the KSČ, albeit on its lower floors?

The difference of attitudes in this respect is highlighted further if we compare the differences between notions of the “scientific” in each case. While most of the rest of the party intelligentsia were pleading for the extrication of science and scholarship from the direct influence of the policy of the KSČ in the latter half of the 1950s, we do not find the same trend in party historiography. Claims for scientific status were being advanced in party historiography, but only within the still strictly political conception of “the building of socialism by new methods,” and not at all as a matter of the “end of the ascendancy of ideology,” that would make “room for scientific theory.”³ Tension of this kind can also be discerned at the level of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of Charles University and its relations with the institutions of party historiography; even though František Červinka and Robert Kvaček devoted themselves to the same period of modern history as their colleagues in the Institute of History of the KSČ, they simply did not fit into the narrative of party historiography.

In any case, it is hardly a complete coincidence that during the campaign against revisionism, those historical works that were criticised were not those of party provenience (in the sense of the definition of *Angažované dějepisectví*), but Kvaček’s *Osudná mise* [A Fateful Mission]⁴ and Kalivoda’s *Husitská ideologie* [Hussite Ideology]. The manuscript of the latter was finished in 1957, however, as a result of criticism could not be published until four years later.⁵ Unlike the party historians, who

3 This expression is borrowed from the well-known discussion on ideology and science conducted on the pages of *Literární noviny* [Literary News] at the beginning of the second half of the 1950s (see KOSÍK, Karel: Hegel a naše doba [Hegel and Our Time]. In: *Literární noviny*, Vol. 5, No. 48 (1956), p. 3). Vítězslav Sommer himself refers to this situation at the end of his chapter on the de-Stalinisation of the Institute of History of the KSČ, when he writes that “instead of a revisionist confrontation with the party leadership, it resulted only in the formulation of a compromise programme of sciencefied part science” (p. 175).

4 KVAČEK, Robert: *Osudná mise* [Fateful Mission]. Praha, Naše vojsko 1958.

5 KALIVODA, Robert: *Husitská ideologie* [Hussite Ideology]. Praha, Nakladatelství ČSAV 1961.

practically ignored the intellectual impulses of the interwar left, Kalivoda openly avowed the influence of Konrad, to whom his *Husitská ideologie* was dedicated.

Naturally, we need a model analysis of all the different factors involved in the process of the personal formation of the intellectuals of the time, but, in my view, the attitudes of party historians as compared to the rest of the party intelligentsia were fundamentally pre-defined by their position in the apparatus of the Central Committee of the KSČ. It is true that Sommer's protagonists became involved in the reform of state socialism in the 1960s (in this context, Sommer brilliantly describes the creation of the legitimation narrative of the Czechoslovak reform movement), but once again one has to ask: were these attitudes not rather different from those of the other reformists? Were they not more a matter of a political attitude formed above all by the environment of the apparatus of the Central Committee of the KSČ, where significant opposition had been growing to the coterie of Antonín Novotný, than a matter of intellectual critical reflections of the type associated with Kosík, Kalivoda or, for instance, Kundera or Vaculík? In my judgement, active involvement of party historians in the formulation of the official reform policy in the "advisory bodies" to important politicians of the Prague Spring indirectly supports this view. Although the other segments of the party reformist intelligentsia had considerable political influence, they were far less represented in these think tanks of reformism than Sommer's historians. Philosophers, writers and publicists tended more to take part in the criticism of political practice and in formulating a more radically conceived reform programme. In other words, although they were members of the KSČ, they were coming from a slightly different political environment and one of the marks of their reformism was extreme wariness with regard to the power structures of the apparatus of the Central Committee of the KSČ. For example, while party historians considered Zdeněk Mlynář a well-known partner, the reformist intellectuals in the circle of *Literární noviny* [Literary News] and later *Literární listy* [Literary Letters] were quite suspicious of him because he had been involved in a series of campaigns against various "excesses" of the party cultural intelligentsia in the 1960s.

Given the angle of Sommer's book, it would obviously be foolish to reproach him for not having devoted attention to the people who were squeezed out of the dominant discourse. Yet, if we pick up our questioning at the point where Vítězslav Sommer ended his study, we can say that the paradigm of party historiography under "normalisation" does not seem to be a matter imported from outside, but drew (*inter alia*) on sources that had been progressively displaced in the late 1950s and especially in the course of the 1960s. One of the pillars of the "normalisation" paradigm would not be something that had broken a path for itself as a new way of seeing, but something that had already once been excluded from the dominant scientific discourse.

In addition, by probing the relations between science and politics, we reach the second problematic aspect of the application of Kuhn's concept to the development of Czechoslovak party historiography. The adoption of the theory of scientific revolutions implies that what happens is a radical overturning of the existing perception

of reality: “What were ducks in the scientist’s world before the revolution are rabbits afterwards.”⁶ According to Kuhn, this means that each new paradigm is completely incommensurable with the previous paradigm – if the world is genuinely a “new world,” it ceases to be comparable with the earlier world. Without wanting to put an “equals” sign between the fifth and seventh decade of the 20th century, I am confident in asserting that Kuhn’s principle of incommensurability does not apply to the “normalisation” and Stalinist paradigms. Admittedly, Stalin did not return in the 1970s even as a symbol, but the campaign against his “cult of personality” was suspended and later made taboo; and a number of old motifs and earlier ostracised figures returned to party historiography, while the notion of the distinctiveness of the Czechoslovak story was replaced by “internationalism” and suchlike. We can likewise detect a certain commensurability between the reformist and the “normalisation” era, whether at the level of the “building of socialism” or in appeals to the authority of Lenin. Generally, it is easier to find examples of commensurability between the different stages of party historiography than to demonstrate their incommensurability. This is the case even despite the (to me personally appealing) view of “normalisation” as a peculiar and distinctive project, with more similarities to modern dictatorships outside the Eastern Bloc than to Stalinism.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the development of party historiography (and not only that), for the second time in a short period, came to be a direct outcome of institutional and other major changes of the political-ideological discourse (Sommer describes the end of the existing milieu of party historiography on pp. 444–462). Party historiography played a part in forming the new situation, but, in the first instance, its institutional form was the immediate result of these changes, just as it had been at the beginning of the 1950s. The change of paradigm in party historiography was not therefore produced by the unsustainability of scientific hypotheses and theories or major discoveries (ground-breaking historical works), enabling a new vision to break through, but on the contrary arose from political changes in which the protagonists of the reformist paradigm ceased to have any influence. To criticise them for excessive connection with politics is in my view beyond the point; they saw historiography as a political struggle, and lost in that struggle, and many remained politically engaged to the end of their lives. Of course, the discursive construction of these people as the defeated or alternative as those others who defeated them needs further thorough exploration. To conclude, it is possible to say there is no doubt that Vítězslav Sommer’s book will be an invaluable source of information and inspiration for such an undertaking.

The Czech version of the article, entitled Vědecké revoluce a politické postoje, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2013), pp. 406–410.

6 KUHN, Thomas Samuel: *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press 1970 (Second edition), p. 111.

Review

Gentle History

A Cultural Historian in the Archives

Adéla Gjuričová

KRAPFL, James: *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou: Politika, kultúra a spoločenstvo v Československu po 17. novembri 1989* [Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture and Community in Czechoslovakia after 17 November 1989]. Bratislava, Kalligram 2009, 302 pp.¹

In the last few years, the field of ideas about the course and meaning of the November Revolution has been defined and even rather restricted by two poles. At one pole, the former victors of the revolution, whose narrative about November was for many years dominant in the public space, have been striving to preserve their version of events; they defend their actions at the time, or, in some cases, offer one of several conspiracy theories.² At the other pole, we can find a politically

1 Now also available in English: KRAPFL, James: *Revolution with a Human Face. Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press 2013.

2 Let us offer two examples here, belonging to different generations as well as political backgrounds: PITHART, Petr: *Devětaosmdesátý: Vzpomínky a přemýšlení. Krédo* [Eighty-Nine: Memories and Reflections. Credo]. Praha, Academia 2009; ŽÁČEK, Pavel: *Vypovídat pravdu a nic nezamlčet: Protokoly parlamentní vyšetřovací komise pro objasnění událostí 17. listopadu 1989* [To Tell the Truth and Hide Nothing: The Protocols of the Parliamentary

strongly profiled group among the youngest generation who are essentially saying the following: it is normal for the narrative of the actors to be fiction, but we have to re-evaluate the very concepts on which it is based and discard black-and-white perceptions of “communist dictatorship,” and “idealistic transformation.”³ In a certain sense, current research on the fall of the communist government at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic is closer to the second pole: the once defining and authentic experience of revolutionary enthusiasm is passing, and as it fades, a surprisingly harsh reality has been suddenly rising out of the archives: elites surviving the change of regimes, unlovely years of transformation and corruption perhaps already present on Národní třída on that famous 17 November 1989.⁴

In *Revolution with a Human Face*, the American historian James Krapfl refuses to play on a field where the lines are drawn in such a way. Anyone who has met the author and knows his scholarship is aware that his work always combines impeccable material and methodological grounding and precision with personal subtlety and what is clearly a fondness for Czechoslovakia’s history. Not that affection in any way obscures his view. On the contrary, Krapfl is surprised at the “mass silence” about popular engagement in politics in 1989 and the way most of the literature focuses on the actions and motivation of elites at the centre. His response is to ask the following question: why not, for a moment, take seriously what the people in the street were thinking then, what they wanted and what they achieved?

Krapfl has spent several years researching in more than thirty local archives in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia and has read the local press from dozens of other places. In doing so, he has taken seriously not just differences in the course of all the different revolutions discovered by this method, but above all the “web of meanings” (to quote Clifford Geertz), which people wove into the events they experienced and witnessed. To interpret them, Krapfl uses the methods of what is known as new cultural history. Inspired by cultural anthropology, it claims that historical events are influenced by perceptions and beliefs of their actors as events unfold and by the ways of attributing meanings to phenomena that are dominant. In this perspective, the 1989 revolution appears as a “reconfiguration of the sacred”: the revolutionary experience of communality is the central point of a new symbolic system and engenders new rituals, moral principles and myths (p. 100).

Committee for the Investigation of the Events of 17 November 1989]. Praha, Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2013, pp. 5–20.

3 See e.g. SLAČÁLEK, Ondřej: O 17. listopadu, podobách moci a cestě k béčkovým životům: Projev na demonstraci ProAlt na Václavském náměstí 17. listopadu 2011 [On 17 November, the Forms of Power and the Road to Second-Rate Lives: Speech at a ProAlt Demonstration on Wenceslas Square on 17 November 2011]. In: *Deník Referendum* (<http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/11943-o-17-listopadu-podobach-moci-a-ceste-k-beckovym-zivotum>).

4 See e.g. the polemic against the description of the 1990s as an “age of innocence” in the thematic block of articles by Tomáš Zahradníček, Jiří Suk, Petr Roubal and Adéla Gjuríčová under the joint title “Éra odhalování” [“The Era of Revealing”] in the journal *Dějiny a současnost*, Vol. 33, No. 11 (2011), pp. 30–43.

By applying this approach to extensive archival material, Krapfl offers a radical alternative to most existing literature on the year 1989. First of all – and here Krapfl admits to taking the American historian Lynn Hunt’s interpretation of the French Revolution as model⁵ – he uses classical literary figures to distinguish between different narratives about November. It all started with the perception of the revolution as a romantic story: the innocence of the students was opposed by the evil of the security forces, but people took the risk of a strike and achieved victory; strangers were embracing each other on the streets, and there was no sign of revolutionary chaos. Very soon, a comedic narrative emerged alongside the romance: it was based on the idea of reconciliation and humanity on both sides of the barricade and was underlined by the negotiations with the Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec and the handover of power culminating in the election of the country’s president. The vitality of the romantic narrative eventually embarrassed the elites behind the comedic narrative. At the beginning of 1990, there were calls from many quarters for the continuation of the revolution, but the leaders of the Civic Forum put the brakes on de-communisation of workplaces. As the elections approached, however, the elites, too, adopted more romantic tropes, warning against dark forces and demanding the handover of communist property to the people. In a similar vein, Krapfl traces the appearance and political implications of the tragic narrative, which sought for the causes of the crisis of the revolution, and the satirical narrative, which undermined the idea that any real revolution had occurred. It will be evident from the example of the conflict between romance and comedy how useful and illuminating a literary critical approach can be. Instead of the conventional limitation of analysis to factors of fear or disillusion, the transfer of power and pressure from the regions, emerges a much more balanced picture of relations between elites and the public.

In a similar conceptual shift, Krapfl’s book surprises the reader with its analysis of the experience of revolutionary solidarity. The experience was so exciting that people shared the sense of a new beginning. According to Krapfl, this sacral feeling was manifested in the collective creativity of the revolution and the sense that the new community could purge itself of the culprits of the old regime. At the same time, the borders of the new community were shifting, although Krapfl differs from the usual Czech view in considering that the accent on reform of democratic structures clashed with Slovak nationalism from the very start. Using the example of the phenomenon of the Civic Forums in Slovakia, Krapfl shows that the mirror-image approach to the history of the “Czech” and “Slovak” revolution, with a consequent reductive focus on dissension between the Civic Forum and the Public against Violence, is too schematic. In many Slovak towns, the Civic Forum was considered a more open structure, and one that was more effective in spreading its message and information than the Public against Violence, dominated as it was by the cultural elite. According to local archives, even before the eruption of anti-Czech Slovak nationalism, the stars of several towns were rising and, in fact,

5 HUNT, Lynn: *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. Berkeley – Los Angeles, University of California Press 1984.

town rivalries initially overshadowed attempts at the reform of federal structures. The road to nationalism led through local patriotism and regionalism that formed another hidden content of what was usually called “pressure from the regions” by the elites: in fact, Petr Cibulka and Jaroslav Šabata were protesting against the disproportionately small representation of Moravians as early as the first assembly of the Civic Forum on 23 December 1989.

The book also tries to identify the content of the ideals of November, and even attempts to present a quantitative assessment of the frequency of certain terms in revolutionary appeals and speeches. What is surprising is the strong representation of the motif of “self-organisation,” i.e. self-government – the taking of government into the people’s own hands that is so ridiculed in the satirical narrative that is dominant today. Socialism also scored highly in terms of frequency. Krapfl rejects the usual interpretation, which is that the actors were deploying the theme purely strategically, and presents a number of cases in which it was systematically used as a positively perceived principle, ideally containing elements of democracy and justice: “We do not want to remove socialism, but want to remove everything that gets in the way of socialism,” declared the Bratislava railway workers on 27 November 1989 (p. 130). Krapfl devotes most of his attention, however, to analysing the revolutionary rules of dialogue and the motif of non-violence. It is on this basis that Krapfl defends the East European revolutions against criticisms that they were unoriginal, as formulated by Jürgen Habermas and François Furet: how could anyone deny that a prohibition on violence in a revolution was innovative?

What is now the mainstream feeling (more than once supported by the present author), that November was a tough struggle over (not only political) power against the background of the ideological naivety of the people in the street, is successfully challenged by the final chapters, entitled “Power in the Street,” and “The Will of the People.” James Krapfl turns from the ideals of the revolution to its practice and offers an extensive view of specific attempts at the direct transformation of social reality that were not based on any orders from the revolutionary elite. At universities and elsewhere, self-governing organs were formed, and cadre departments were dissolved, for instance. The trade union movement, which is so often “written off,” democratised itself in a fascinating way; people reminded the revolutionary leaders of the importance of the role of national committees and distributed a pamphlet put together by law students on how to legally dismiss directors at the workplace or establish independent unions. This is why they were so shaken by Pithart’s TV speech of 19 January 1990, which painted a dark picture of the rampaging of action committees (comparing them to the communist committees following February 1948), and presumably appealed for calm changes on the basis of roundtable agreements.⁶

Using archival material, Krapfl shows that local civic forums did not bid for positions through appeals to the centre, but primarily tried to mediate the will of the

6 Projev P. Pitharta v Čes. Televizi [Petr Pithart’s Speech on Czechoslovak Television]. In: *Informum*, No. 11 (23 January 1990), pp. 1–3.

people. Indeed, the spokespeople of the Civic Forum and the Public against Violence local branches formed an immensely interesting sample because in the great majority of cases they had been genuinely democratically chosen. For the same reason, outside Prague and a few big cities, the dominance of cultural intelligentsia simply did not operate, and skilled workers and technical intelligentsia predominated. Above all, this local revolutionary public achieved a great deal, in, for example, stopping the felling of trees in Podhrad near Cheb. They avowed and practiced a remarkable combination of direct and representative democracy in all of this.

This exciting story of the growing distance between the revolutionary demos and the revolutionary elites is depicted in full by James Krapfl in his *Revolution with a Human Face*. Perhaps my only doubt about the book's thesis concerns the way in which the archives that Krapfl uses actually came into existence. Possibly, their contents are somewhat conditioned by their creation in the spirit of a revolutionary act. Some other collections, especially of institutional origin, show a somewhat higher representation of conservative "counter-revolutionary" voices.⁷ My only other complaint is not about the book, but is that James Krapfl is fully occupied lecturing at McGill University in Montreal and currently has no time to come over to Central Europe and conduct further research. Indeed, we are already looking forward to the moment when he will have another opportunity to do so.

The Czech version of the article, entitled Něžná historie. Kulturní historik v archivu, was originally published in Soudobé dějiny, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2013), pp. 445–448.

7 This applies for example to the letters of citizens and collectives addressed to the Commission of the Federal Parliament for the investigation of the events of 17 November 1989 under the leadership of Jozef Stank – the writers often defended the police intervention on Národní třída (see Archive of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, fund Federal Parliament – V. (1986–1990), Commission of the Federal Parliament for the investigation of the events of 17 November 1989 (Stank), Box 5 – *Spisy* [Official files]).

Summaries

Essays and articles

Continuity and Discontinuity in the History of the Welfare State in Czechoslovakia (1918–56)

Jakub Rákosník

This article focuses on the long-term trends in the development of social policy between the First World War and the mid-1950s. The author begins by summarising the main ideas of his own previous articles and books. He emphasises the continuity and discontinuity in the general conception of Czechoslovak social policy in this period. He also considers conceptual questions, particularly those that would help to explain how the basic terms are employed in historical analysis. The article moves between the two poles of the construction of causality – structural explanation and voluntaristic explanation. The content of the article can be aptly summed up in a neat metaphor: from Bismarck by way of Beveridge to Stalin. In personified form, this shortcut expresses the long-term development of Czechoslovak social policy: from an emphasis on principles of merit, characteristic of the traditional German and Austrian social insurance schemes, by way of a considerably more egalitarian national insurance from 1948 (strongly influenced by the British system), to the Soviet model of social security, which developed from 1951 to 1956. The article also considers important changes in social legislation in the Czechoslovak Republic in this period, including the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

“It Will Not Work without a Social Policy!”***Research on Social Practice on the Territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia***

Radka Šustrová

Social policy in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, from mid-March 1939 to early May 1945, is a key topic in contemporary research on the history of this brief period. The article is concerned with the possible approaches to research with regard to the latest trends in research on National Socialism. It begins with an outline of the historiography of social policy in the Protectorate, which is marked chiefly by a predominant uniformity of argumentation, a lack of systematic approach to interpretation, and Czech and Czechoslovak historians' limiting themselves to the ethnically Czech population. Research conducted so far has completely failed to put social policy into the context of social history. The author thus first provides an outline of the social framework, which represents the concept of a *Volksgemeinschaft* (national/ethnic/racial community), in which ideas about the purpose and function of social policy were formed and implemented. In the next part, she focuses on the definition of the term “social policy” as understood by Nazi theorists after 1933. In the last part of the article, she seeks to define the new social relations in the Czech-German environment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and suggests possibilities of its analysis in the area of the implementation of social policy. She believes that it will be fruitful to study the implementation of the relevant criteria in the Reich and the Protectorate at the level of discussions among experts, and to research social policy in practice. The author sees the most important aspects of the implementation of social policy as residing in the various motivations of the regime when implementing social policy in relation to different parts of the population, ranging from social exclusion to forms of social protectionism.

Unwanted Silesia***Czech “Silesian Identity” in Postwar Czechoslovakia (1945–69)***

Jiří Knapík – Zdeněk Jirásek

The Czech “Silesian identity”, obvious throughout the twentieth century, was based on a mixture of strong regional, even local, patriotism, which was determined by historical developments. This patriotism developed on the ethnically mixed territory of Czech Silesia (formerly Austrian Silesia). After the Second World War, this phenomenon was quickly revived, but unlike in the pre-war period, it took a clearly Czech national form. The territorial factor, by contrast, receded into the background. Behind this activity and new interpretation stood intellectual circles and institutions in Opava, some leading figures from Ostrava, and the Silesian Cultural Institute in Prague. In addition to cultural-educational activity, their efforts were concentrated

on claiming some border areas of Polish and German Silesia as being historically Czech, and also on ensuring the distinctive administrative status of the territory of Silesia in Czechoslovakia, the seed of which they saw in the Ostrava branch of the Moravian National Committee (*Zemský národní výbor*) in Brno. During the Communist regime, according to the authors, the top state authorities showed an intentional lack of interest in the problems of Silesia when solving related economic and other questions. A consequence of this was a “silencing of the official sources” about Silesia. In the 1950s, the “Silesian-ness” was condemned as a form of “bourgeois nationalism” and was identified with the period of Czech-Polish national friction in the region. From the administrative point of view, Silesia was dissolved in the Ostrava area, later in the North Moravian Region, and was recalled practically only by artistic expressions of an “Old Silesian-ness”, such as folklore and museum exhibitions. Silesian organizations and societies were, with few exceptions, dissolved or renamed and the newly established Silesian Research Institute in Opava had to orient its historical research chiefly to the labour movement. The works of the poet Petr Bezruč (born Vladimír Vašek, 1867–1958) and his collection of verses, *Slezské písně* (Silesian Songs), presented a problem because of their questionable depiction of Silesian identity, and the publication of the complete collection led to disputes in cultural policy. The Ostrava-based arts and politics periodical *Červený květ* (Red Flower), which repeatedly included debates about regionalism, began to be published in the mid-1950s. At the end of the decade, however, the Communist Party launched a campaign against parochialism (*lokálpatriotismus*), which was reflected also in the condemnation of publications seeking to exonerate the poems and ideas of Ondra Lysohorsky (born Ervín Goj, 1905–1989), who during the war promoted the theory of a “Lach nation.” In the 1960s, the local authorities and figures of Opava again began to emphasize the role of their town as a regional centre. During the Prague Spring of 1968, there were calls for the restoration of Silesian self-government, but that remained more or less limited to the Opava region, and consequently some “Silesian” cultural initiatives from this period were of greater importance.

Lessons from the Crisis Development

The Picture of the Prague Spring in “Normalisation Prose”

Alena Fialová (Šporková)

The article considers the picture of the year 1968 and what is popularly known as the “Prague Spring” as it appears in establishment prose fiction from the “Normalisation” period (that is, the return to hard-line Communism with the defeat of the reform wing of the Party and the years of the Soviet occupation, 1970-89). Normalisation fiction – in accord with the government publication *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ* [Lessons from the Crisis Development in the Party and Society after the 13th Congress of the Communist

Party of Czechoslovakia] – tried to legitimise the policy of Normalisation as a new stage in the development of Socialism. The author analyses the plans and model solutions, which helped to form an ideologised interpretation of social development in Czechoslovakia from January to the Soviet-led intervention of Warsaw Pact troops in late August 1968. The article also considers how the authors of this fiction (a total of sixteen novels, the best known of which is Alexej Pludek's anti-Semitic *Vabank* [Gamble] portray the broader historical context, how they explain the motivation and aims of the leaders of the reform movement and describe the participation of various social strata in the political events. Some of these works are instructive models of the future life of the main characters and their orientation in the new circumstances in the phase called “real, existing Socialism” in the 1970s and ‘80s. Apart from that, the article considers how established literary critics accepted attempts in *belles-lettres* to depict the recent “crisis years,” from which the new regime hoped to distance itself as clearly as possible.

Political Games with the “Unfinished Revolution”
Settling Accounts with Communism in the Times of the Civic Forum and after Its Disintegration (1989–92)

Jiří Suk

This article discusses the birth and early dynamics of Czech post-Communist anti-Communism. It is based on the recognition that during the political takeover in November and December 1989 the policy of radical discontinuity remained a marginal, practically invisible and inaudible phenomenon in the mostly restful period of civil unrest. In the generally shared atmosphere of “national understanding,” which led to the historic compromise between the old, Socialist regime and the new, democratic regime, there was no room for a policy of radically settling scores with the Communist Party and the past. It was all the more surprising, therefore, when demands along these lines (the relinquishing of Party property, the outlawing of the Party, the punishment of criminal and treasonous politicians) appeared as if out of nowhere as early as the beginning of 1990, and then intensified. Memory was awakened and its numerous previously buried levels now emerged in public life. The incursion of the dark, unrecognised, and unprocessed past into the artificial reality of historic compromise caused frustration with ethics in the ranks of the nascent political élite. It was but a small step from the political prisoners' awakened memories of crimes committed by the recently defeated regime to the now current problems with the “nomenclature brotherhoods” and “Communist mafias” in the provinces and in businesses throughout the country. Calls for a thorough settling of scores were heard with increasing frequency from Civic Forum, the victorious political movement, and they eventually became the catalyst of the pronounced division within the Civic Forum. But these calls never turned into a decisive political strategy and they managed to hold a dominant place only in the programmes

of the less important parties and organizations like the Club of Politically-Engaged Non-Party Members (*Klub angažovaných nestraníků* – KAN) and the Confederation of Political Prisoners (*Konfederace politických vězňů*). After the break-up of the Civic Forum in late 1990 and early 1991, radical anti-Communism ran out of steam, and the right-of-centre political parties that emerged from the erstwhile Civic Forum – primarily the Civic Democratic Party, the Civic Democratic Alliance, and the Christian Democratic Party – adapted the originally radical demands to a realistic policy of compromise based on the fact that the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, with the support of more than ten per cent of the electorate, remained a part of the democratic political system. The largely ignored sense of frustration with morals, stemming from the fundamental contradiction between the ideal (that is, comprehensive) possibilities of a policy of settling scores and the real (that is, limited) possibilities, was put off for later years, and remains a public problem to this day.

Prague Chronicle

Chronicler of Communist Czechoslovakia

Karel Kaplan and the Study of Contemporary History

Vítězslav Sommer

The author attempts to pinpoint the place of the historian Karel Kaplan (b. 1928) in the context of Czech historiography of the last half century, to show the changes in the basic tendencies characterising his work, and to consider his role in the formation of the field of contemporary history in the Czech Republic. Kaplan is perhaps the most prolific and most translated Czech historian living today. His career is emblematic of the path taken by Czech research on contemporary history and its writing.

As a historian he began to publish in the 1950s when he worked in the *apparat* of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. At that time he devoted himself to regional topics with a tendency to be a Party propagandist, offering interpretations that conformed to the times. His earlier works, however, share the same respect for the sources as his later works do. In the 1960s, Kaplan found himself at the forefront of reform in Czechoslovak historiography. He exposed and criticised the preparation of the show trials of the previous decade (partly because he was on “rehabilitation commissions” set up by the Communist regime), and he saw his work on history as a way to redress failed policy. Kaplan defected to West Germany in 1976, and in numerous publications he then acquainted readers in the West with the operation of the Communist regime and political repression in Czechoslovakia. He used as his sources many unique archival records, which he had managed to get out of the country, and he completely abandoned his political ambitions, tending instead

to be utterly empirical in his work. Back in Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic since 1990, he has developed his empirical, fact-based, approach, seeking objectivity, in a number of other, often very large, works systematically charting out the history of Czechoslovakia from 1945 to the early 1970s. The focus of Kaplan's research has, however, shifted in recent years from analysis of the regime to analysis of society.

In the conclusion of his article, the author discusses the weaknesses and strengths of Kaplan's works and methods. Considering the changes that the historical sciences have gone through in recent times, he considers problematic Kaplan's clinging to the objectivity of historical knowledge, his positivistic interpretation of archive records without a real interpretational framework, and his dry, matter-of-fact style of writing. On the other hand, his contribution to our knowledge of the history of Communist Czechoslovakia is pioneering and absolutely fundamental. No historian in the field can get by without the results of Kaplan's research.

“The Past is the Battleground of Our Contemporaries”

A Conference Organised on the Occasion of Vilém Prečan's 80th Birthday

Jiří Hoppe

Organized chiefly by the Institute of Contemporary History, Prague, a conference, “The Past is the Battlefield of the Our Contemporaries,” was held in the Czernin Palace, Prague, on 24 and 25 January 2013, to mark the eightieth birthday of the historian Vilém Prečan, the first director of the Institute and the current Chairman of the Board of the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre. The conference was accompanied by an evening of music and a buffet dinner at the Museum of Music, organised by the National Museum, Prague. The author reports here on all the papers given in the five conference blocks, and concludes with a long quotation of Vilém Prečan's views on some of the papers and topics presented at the conference.

Book Reviews

Purely Subjective Biography and the Limits of “Objective” Sources

Doubravka Olšáková

Miles, Jonathan. *Devět životů Otto Katze: Příběh komunistického superšpiona z Čech* [original edition: *The Nine Lives of Otto Katz: The Remarkable True Story a Communist Super-Spy*. London: Bantam, 1998]. Trans. Petruška Šustrová. Praha and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2012, 336 pp.;

Laurence, Charles. *Společenský agent Jiří Mucha: Lásky a žal za železnou oponou – intriky, sex, špioni* [original edition: *The Social Agent: A True Intrigue of Sex, Spies, and Heartbreak behind the Iron Curtain*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010]. Trans. Kateřina Lipenská. Praha: Prostor, 2012, 250 pp.

The reviewer compares the biographies of two cosmopolitan Czech intellectuals who worked as agents of the Communist secret police. The publication by Charles Laurence is about the writer Jiří Mucha (1915–1991), the son of the renowned painter Alfons Mucha. Jiří Mucha spent a considerable part of his life in France, but also lived in Czechoslovakia, where he spent four years in prison in the 1950s. The other book under review, by Jonathan Miles, is about the journalist Otto Katz (1895–1952). Under the name André Simone, Katz worked to promote the Communist movement in interwar Europe and then in the United States and Mexico during the war, before returning to Czechoslovakia after the war to be a functionary of the Communist press. Katz was eventually sentenced in the Slánský show trial and was then executed. Whereas Miles, on the basis of wide-ranging archive records, seeks to give an objective account of Katz's life, Laurence tells Mucha's story from a subjective standpoint, with personal bias, as part of his own complicated family history. According to the reviewer, Laurence makes his points more compellingly than Miles, thanks in part to his effective literary style; Miles, by contrast, remains in the grip of the sources and their apparent objectivity, thus failing to pay enough attention to the historical context.

Unreliable Elements, or the Object of Social Engineering in the Czech Borderlands?

David Kovařík

Spurný, Matěj. *Nejsou jako my: Česká společnost a menšiny v pohraničí (1945–1960)* [They Are Not Like Us: Czech Society and Minorities in the Borderlands (1945–1960)]. Praha: Antikomplex, 2011, 373 pp.

In this review, the author discusses the main ideas in Matěj Spurný's book that he considers an important contribution to the social history of postwar Czechoslovakia, since Spurný attempts not only to identify the changing attitude of majority Czech society and its political élites towards minority groups (Germans, Roma, and Volhynian Czechs), but also to identify the *Sinnwelt* and social practice which emerged in the borderlands after the Second World War against the background of the local processes of expulsion and resettlement. The author focuses on Spurný's argument that events in the borderlands became, in a certain sense, a laboratory for state-wide developments. But he expresses doubts about the justifiability of linking analyses of the Volhynian Czechs with other groups of re-emigrants. According to the author of the article, Spurný's *Nejsou jako my* adds much to our knowledge about the Czech borderlands and their inhabitants, and is likely to

encourage debate about more general questions related to postwar Czech history and its interpretation.

About an End or a Beginning?

Czech Historiography and Research into the Final Phase of the Second World War

Radka Šustrová

Hrbek, Jaroslav, Vít Smetana, Stanislav Kokoška, Vladimír Pilát, and Petr Hofman. *Draze zaplacená svoboda: Osvobození Československa 1944–1945* [Freedom Dearly Bought: The Liberation of Czechoslovakia 1944-1945], Vol. 1–2. Praha: Paseka, 2009, 351 and 358 pp.;

Kokoška, Stanislav et al. *Nultá hodina? Československo na jaře 1945 ve strategických souvislostech* [Zero Hour? Czechoslovakia in the Spring of 1945 in Strategic Contexts]. (Edice Prostopravdy, vol. 2.) Praha: Euroslavica – Nadační fond angažovaných nestraníků, 2011, 256 pp.

According to the reviewer, the two publications under review – Hrbek, Smetana et al.'s *Draze zaplacená svoboda* and Kokoška et al.'s *Nultá hodina?* – to a considerable extent combine the personal outlooks of their authors, a chronological delimitation, and an orientation to military, political and diplomatic history, but pay less attention to the circumstances in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia towards the end of the Second World War. The reviewer acquaints the reader with the individual chapters or articles in the publications, together with the authors' principal arguments, and considers the context of historical research on the end of the Second World War and the transition to post-war conditions.

The “Golden Era” or Only a “Sweet Intermezzo” of Czech Sociology?

Miloslav Petrusek

Nešpor, Zdeněk R. *Republika sociologů: Zlatá éra české sociologie v meziválečném období a krátce po druhé světové válce* [The Republic of Sociologists: The Golden Era of Czech Sociology in the Interwar Period and Shortly after the Second World War]. Praha: Scriptorium, 2011, 304 pp.

The work under review is the first history of Czech and Slovak sociology from its beginnings to 1948. Its author, according to the reviewer, has superbly combined sociological understanding with an historical overview, archive research, and extraordinary industry. The reviewer considers the essential strong points of the publication to be its readability and objectivity, as well as its wealth of facts and

reliability. The reviewer also discusses the point of writing a history of Czech sociology as a social science that made only a minimal contribution internationally.

Scientific Revolutions and Political Attitudes

Jan Mervart

Sommer, Vítězslav. *Angažované dějepisectví* [Engaged Historiography: Party Historiography between Stalinism and Reform Communism]. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny – Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2011, 508 pp.

The reviewer mainly appreciates the fact that Sommer's monograph takes so-called "Party historiography" seriously rather than as a mere instrument of politics or propaganda. Thanks to that, it can legitimately be read at least on two levels: as the study of an important segment of Czech postwar historiography extending also into the history of other fields of the humanities in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist periods and also as the story of Communist intellectuals' gradual involvement in the formation of the socialist dictatorship, its limited criticism, and the attempt at its reform. In his overall positive assessment, the reviewer also expresses doubts whether the gradual emancipation of Czech historiography from Stalinist dogma can really be ascribed to the change in scientific paradigms, as Sommer interprets it in connection with Thomas Kuhn's conception, or whether it resulted from a change in the political attitudes of historians. The reviewer claims that Communist historians at the start of de-Stalinization were on the whole much more conformist than, for example, philosophers or writers, and he puts forth the hypothesis that this reflects their stronger affiliation with the structures of the Party *apparat*.

Gentle History

A Cultural Historian in the Archives

Adéla Gjuričová

Krapfl, James. *Revolúcia s ľudskou tvárou: Politika, kultúra a spoločnosť v Československu po 17. novembri 1989*. Bratislava: Kalligram, 2009, 302 pp.

In the work under review, which has now been published in a revised and expanded English edition, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992* (Ithaca, NY, 2013), the American historian James Krapfl has successfully avoided the danger of letting his work be defined by contemporary disputes about whether to interpret the events as a so-called Velvet Revolution. Instead, he has combined thorough research in many archives with the approaches of the "new cultural history". In this book, he searches for the now veiled con-

tent of the ideals of November 1989, which appeared in the political slogans and public statements of the time; he analyses the “revolutionary” rules of dialogue, and considers the topic of non-violence, in which he sees the special features of the democratic revolutions of Eastern Europe. Far more than in the efforts of other historians, Krapfl presents a balanced and nuanced picture of contemporaneous thinking and the relations between the élites and the public. This work is, according to the reviewer, an essential alternative to most of the existing works about the Changes of late 1989.

Contributors

Alena Fialová (Šporková) (1979) is a literary historian and a researcher at the Department for Research into 20th Century and Contemporary Literature of the Institute for Czech Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. She focuses on Czech prose from the Second World War till the present. She published a monograph entitled *Poučení z krizového vývoje: Poválečná česká společnost v reflexi normalizační prózy* [Lessons Learnt from the Crisis Development: Postwar Czech Society in the Reflection of Normalisation Prose] (Prague, 2014), she is the main editor of the publication *V souřadnicích mnohosti: Česká literatura první dekády jednadvacátého století v interpretacích* [Coordinates of Diversity: Czech Literature in the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century in Interpretations] (Praha 2014) and she collaborated on the four-volume *Dějiny české literatury 1945–1989* [History of Czech Literature 1945–1989] (Prague, 2007–2008).

Adéla Gjuričová (1971) is a senior researcher at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Her primary academic interest is the changes in the ideological discourse of the Czech right-wing spectrum from late 1989 onwards. She heads a working group researching Czechoslovak parliamentarism in the period of the post-Communist transformation. Together with Jaroslav Cuhra, Jiří Ellinger, and Vít Smetana, she is the co-author of the fourth volume of *České země v evropských dějinách* [Czech Lands in European History] (Prague and Litomyšl, 2006), a textbook covering the period 1918–2004, and, together with Michal Kopeček, Petr Roubal, Jiří Suk, and Tomáš Zahradníček, she is the co-author of the monograph *Rozdělení minulosti: Vytváření politických identit v České republice po roce 1989* [Divided by the Past: The Creation of Political Identities in the Czech Republic after 1989] (Prague, 2011).

Jiří Hoppe (1968) is a researcher at the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. His main academic interest is twentieth-century Czechoslovak and Czech history, particularly the reform movement of the 1960s

which led to the Prague Spring of 1968. Among his publications, one could mention the monograph *Opozice '68: Sociální demokracie, KAN a K 231 v období pražského jara* [Opposition '68: Social Democracy, KAN a K 231 in the Period of the Prague Spring] (Prague, 2009).

Zdeněk Jirásek (1957) is a historian and politician, and Professor of History at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the Silesian University in Opava. He was the Dean of the mentioned Faculty in 1997–2001 and 2007–2011; in the meantime, he served as Rector of the Silesian University (2001–2007). On top of that, he was the Mayor of the City of Opava between 2011 and 2014. His research focuses on the economic history of postwar Czechoslovakia, the history of Silesia, the history of Czechoslovak-Polish relations and on Czechoslovak exile after February 1948. Among his publications, one could mention *Nechanická aféra 1947* [The Nechanice Affair 1947] (Hradec Králové, 1992); with Andrzej Małkiewicz, he wrote *Polska i Czechosłowacja w dobie stalinizmu (1948–1956): Studium porównawcze* [Poland and Czechoslovakia in the Period of Stalinism (1948–1956): A Comparative Study] (Warsaw, 2005); with Jiří Friedl, he wrote *Rozpačité spojení: Československo-polské vztahy v letech 1945–1949* [An Ambivalent Alliance: Czechoslovak-Polish Relations in 1945–1949] (Prague, 2008), and with Aleš Binar, he wrote *Kravaře v letech 1945–2008* [Kravaře in the Years 1945–2008] (Kravaře, 2009).

Jiří Knapík (1975) is the head of the Institute of Historical Sciences at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the Silesian University in Opava. The primary focus of his research is policy on the arts in Czechoslovakia after 1945, about which he published a biography entitled *Kdo spoutal naši kulturu: Portrét stalinisty Gustava Bareše* [Who Tied Our Culture: A Portrayal of the Stalinist Gustav Bareš] (Přerov, 2000), a dictionary *Kdo byl kdo v naší kulturní politice 1948–1953* [Who Was Who in Our Cultural Policy 1948–1953] (Prague, 2002), and two monographs entitled *Únor a kultura: Sovětizace české kultury 1948–1950* [February and Culture: Sovietisation of Czech Culture 1948–1950] (Prague, 2004) and *V zajetí moci: Kulturní politika, její systém a aktéři 1948–1956* [In the Captivity of Power: Cultural Politics, Its System and Actors 1948–1956] (Prague, 2004). On top of that, he focuses on cultural life, lifestyle and leisure in the first two decades of communist Czechoslovakia. Together with Martin Franc, he is the author of *Průvodce kulturním děním a životním stylem v českých zemích 1948–1967* [Guide to Cultural Events and Lifestyle in the Czech Lands] (Prague, 2011). Together with the same co-author, he published the monograph *Volný čas v českých zemích 1957–1967* [Leisure in the Czech Lands 1957–1967] (Praha 2013). He has also published on twentieth-century Silesia: *Slezský studijní ústav v Opavě 1945–1948* [The Silesian Study Institute in Opava 1945–1948] (Prague, 2004) and, together with Jarmila Knapíková, “*Slezský konzulát*” v Praze: *Od Slezanu ke Slezskému kulturnímu ústavu 1906–1945* [The “Silesian Consulate” in Prague: From the Silesian to the Silesian Cultural Organisation 1906–1945] (Opava, 2010).

David Kovařík (1972) is a researcher at the Brno branch of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. His main academic interest is Czech and Czechoslovak history after 1945, particularly life in the borderlands and modern history of the city of Brno. His publications include *Proměny českého pohraničí v letech 1958–1960: Demoliční akce v českém pohraničí se zřetelem k vývoji od roku 1945* [Transformations of the Czech Borderlands in the Years 1958–1960: The Demolition Action in the Czech Borderlands with Regard to Developments after 1945] (Brno, 2006). Together with Adrian von Arburg and Tomáš Dvořák, he published *Německy mluvící obyvatelstvo v Československu po roce 1945* [The German-Speaking Population in Czechoslovakia after 1945] (Brno, 2010).

Jan Mervart (1980) is a researcher at the Department of Modern Czech Philosophy, Institute for Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. His main academic interests include the history of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the changes in its ideology, particularly the activity of communist intellectuals in the 1960s and the potential uses of feature films as a historical source. His publications include *Naděje a iluze: Čeští a slovenští spisovatelé v reformním hnutí šedesátých let* [Hopes and Illusions: Czech and Slovak Writers of the Reform Movement in the 1960s] (Brno, 2010).

Doubravka Olšáková (1977) is a researcher at the Centre for the History of Science and Scholarship, Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. She focuses on Czech–French relations in the 19th and 20th centuries, Czech historiography after 1945, changes in collective mentalities, and the sovietisation of scholarship in Central Europe under communism. She published a monograph entitled *Věda jde k lidu! Československá společnost pro šíření politických a vědeckých znalostí a popularizace věd v Československu ve 20. století* [Science Goes to the People! Czechoslovak Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge and the Popularisation of Sciences in Czechoslovakia in the 20th Century] (Prague, 2014). She is also the co-author of *Ernest Denis: Život a dílo* [Ernest Denis: Life and Work] (together with Tomáš Chrobák, Praha 2003). Together with Markéta Devátá, Vítězslav Sommer, and Peter Dinuš, she is the co-author of *Vědní koncepce KSČ a její institucionalizace po roce 1948* [Scientific Conceptions of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and Its Institutionalisation after 1948] (Prague, 2010). Together with Zdeněk Vybíral, she edited a volume on the history symposia held in Tábor, South Bohemia, in the years of “normalization” policy entitled *Husitský Tábor: Sborník Husitského muzea* [Hussite Tábor: Proceedings of the Hussite Museum] (Ústí nad Labem, 2004). Her most recent publication as editor is a similar volume: *Niky české historiografie: Uherskobrodská symposia J. A. Komenského v ofenzivě (1971–1989)* [Peaks of Czech Historiography: Uherský Brod Symposia of J. A. Komenský in Offensive (1971–1989)] (Červený Kostelec, 2012).

Miloslav Petrušek (1936–2012) was Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Sociological Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. In 1991–96, he was Dean of the Faculty and, from 1997 to 2000, he was the Provost of Charles University. In 1990–1994 and again in 2001–2002, he was the Chairman of the *Masaryk Sociological Association*. At the SLON Publishing House, he was in charge of editions related to classical, modern, and postmodern sociology. His primary scholarly interest was sociology in general, sociology of art, history of Czech and world sociology and contemporary sociology. Among his many publications, one could mention *Alternativní sociologie: Úvahy o smyslu sociologie v nealternativní společnosti* [Alternative Sociology: Reflections on the Meaning of Sociology in Non-Alternative Society] (Prague, 1992; originally *samizdat*, 1986), *Sociologie a literatura* [Sociology and Literature] (Prague, 1990), *Teorie a metoda v moderní sociologii* [Theory and Methods in Modern Sociology] (Prague, 1993), *Společnosti pozdní doby* [Societies of the Later Periods] (Prague, 2006), and *Základy sociologie* [The Basics of Sociology] (Prague, 2009). In addition, he was the head of a group of researchers contributing to the *Velký sociologický slovník* [The Big Sociological Dictionary] (Prague, 1996).

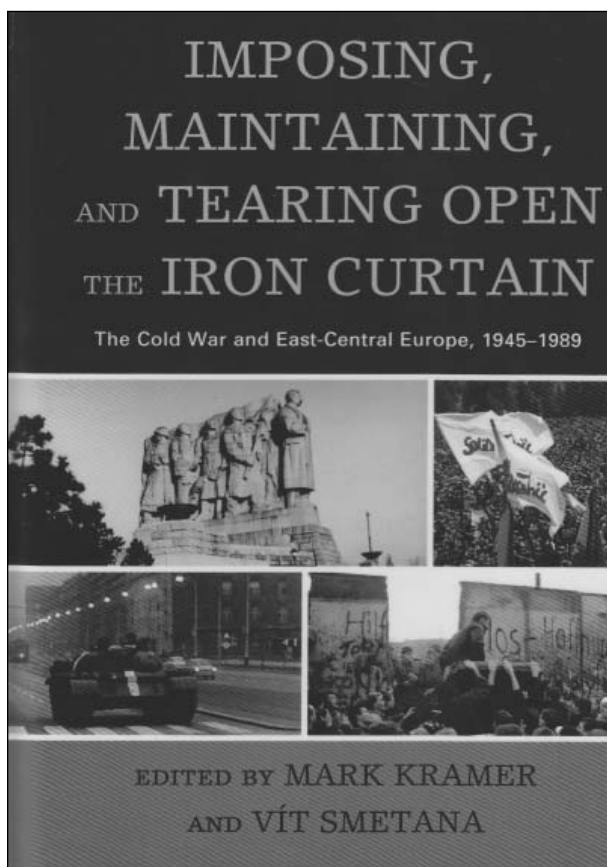
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Vítězslav Sommer (1981) is a senior researcher at the Masaryk Institute and Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Currently, he is on a scholarship at the Sorbonne, Paris, where he focuses on the role of expert knowledge about society and politics in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s. His primary scholarly interest is the history of the radical left, the communist movement and the theory of historiography, particularly communist historiography in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s. His publications include *Angažované dějepiscectví: Stranická historiografie mezi stalinismem a reformním komunismem (1950–1970)* [Engaged Historiography: Party Historiography between Stalinism and Reform Communism (1950–1970)] (Prague, 2011).

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developments from the late 1960s onwards, in particular changes in the system of power in 1989–1993. His publications include, for example, *Labyrintem revoluce: Aktéři, zápletky a křižovatky jedné politické krize (od listopadu 1989 do června 1990)* [Through the Labyrinth of Revolution: Actors, Plots and Crossroads of One Political Crisis (From November 1989 to June 1990)] (Prague, 2003 and 2009), which was awarded the Magnesia Litera Prize in 2003. His latest publications are the monograph *Politika jako absurdní drama: Václav Havel v letech 1975–1989* [Politics as an Absurd Drama: Václav Havel in the Years 1975–1989] (Prague, 2013) and the study with an edition of sources *Konstituční, nebo existenciální revoluce? Václav Havel a Federální shromáždění 1989/1990* [A Constitutional or an Existentialist Revolution? Václav Havel and the Federal Parliament 1989/1990] (Prague, 2014).

Radka Šustrová (1986) is a researcher at the Masaryk Institute and Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Her research focuses on Nazi social policy, history of the ethnic German minority in the Czech Lands and on children and the youth in the Third Reich and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Among her publications, one could mention *Pod ochranou protektorátu: Kinderlandverschickung v Čechách a na Moravě: Politika, každodennost a paměť 1940–1945* [Under the Protection of the Protectorate: Kinderlandverschickung in Bohemia and Moravia: Politics, Everydayness and Memory 1940–1945] (Prague, 2012).



Mark Kramer – Vít Smetana (ed.): *Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain. The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989.* Lanham – Boulder – New York – Toronto – Plymouth (UK), Lexington Books 2014.

This book consists of cutting-edge essays by distinguished experts who discuss the Cold War in Europe from beginning to end, with a particular focus on the countries that were behind the “Iron Curtain”. The contributors take account of structural conditions that helped generate the Cold War schism in Europe, but they also ascribe agency to local actors as well as to superpowers. The chapters dealing with the end of the Cold War in Europe explain not only why it ended but also why the events leading to that outcome occurred almost entirely peacefully.

Contributors: Oliver Bange, Csaba Békés, Thomas Blanton, László Borhi, Anne Deighton, Hope M. Harrison, James G. Hershberg, David Holloway, Michael F. Hopkins, Mark Kramer, Richard Ned Lebow, Silvio Pons, Alex Pravda, Peter Ruggenthaler, Svetlana Savranskaya, Bernd Schaefer, Rolf Steininger, Vít Smetana, Georges-Henri Soutou, Soňa Szomolányi, and Oldřich Tůma.



Kateřina Čapková: *Czechs, Germans, Jews? National Identity and the Jews of Bohemia*. Translated by Derek and Marzia Paton, New York – Oxford, Berghahn Books 2012.

The phenomenon of national identities, always a key issue in the modern history of Bohemian Jewry, was particularly complex because of the marginal differences that existed between the available choices. Considerable overlap was evident in the programs of the various national movements and it was possible to change one's national identity or even to opt for more than one such identity without necessarily experiencing any far-reaching consequences in everyday life. Based on many hitherto unknown archival sources from the Czech Republic, Israel and Austria, the author's research reveals the inner dynamic of each of the national movements and maps out the three most important constructions of national identity within Bohemian Jewry – the German-Jewish, the Czech-Jewish and the Zionist. This book provides a needed framework for understanding the rich history of German- and Czech-Jewish politics and culture in Bohemia and is a notable contribution to the historiography of Bohemian, Czechoslovak and central European Jewry.